

*Blackwell
Companions to
Philosophy*

A COMPANION TO ATHEISM AND PHILOSOPHY



Edited by
GRAHAM OPPY

WILEY Blackwell

A Companion to Atheism and Philosophy

Blackwell Companions to Philosophy

This outstanding student reference series offers a comprehensive and authoritative survey of philosophy as a whole. Written by today's leading philosophers, each volume provides lucid and engaging coverage of the key figures, terms, topics, and problems of the field. Taken together, the volumes provide the ideal basis for course use, representing an unparalleled work of reference for students and specialists alike.

Already published in the series:

1. The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy, Second Edition
Edited by Nicholas Bunnin and Eric Tsui-James
2. A Companion to Ethics
Edited by Peter Singer
3. A Companion to Aesthetics, Second Edition
Edited by Stephen Davies, Kathleen Marie Higgins, Robert Hopkins, Robert Stecker, and David E. Cooper
4. A Companion to Epistemology, Second Edition
Edited by Jonathan Dancy, Ernest Sosa and Matthias Steup
5. A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy (two-volume set), Second Edition
Edited by Robert E. Goodin and Philip Pettit
6. A Companion to Philosophy of Mind
Edited by Samuel Guttenplan
7. A Companion to Metaphysics, Second Edition
Edited by Jaegwon Kim, Ernest Sosa and Gary S. Rosenkrantz
8. A Companion to Philosophy of Law and Legal Theory, Second Edition
Edited by Dennis Patterson
9. A Companion to Philosophy of Religion, Second Edition
Edited by Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper, and Philip L. Quinn
10. A Companion to the Philosophy of Language, Second Edition (two-volume set)
Edited by Bob Hale, Crispin Wright, and Alex Miller
11. A Companion to World Philosophies
Edited by Eliot Deutsch and Ron Bontekoe
12. A Companion to Continental Philosophy
Edited by Simon Critchley and William Schroeder
13. A Companion to Feminist Philosophy
Edited by Alison M. Jaggar and Iris Marion Young
14. A Companion to Cognitive Science
Edited by William Bechtel and George Graham
15. A Companion to Bioethics, Second Edition
Edited by Helga Kuhse and Peter Singer
16. A Companion to the Philosophers
Edited by Robert L. Arrington
17. A Companion to Business Ethics
Edited by Robert E. Frederick
18. A Companion to the Philosophy of Science
Edited by W. H. Newton-Smith
19. A Companion to Environmental Philosophy
Edited by Dale Jamieson
20. A Companion to Analytic Philosophy
Edited by A. P. Martinich and David Sosa
21. A Companion to Genethics
Edited by Justine Burley and John Harris
22. A Companion to Philosophical Logic
Edited by Dale Jacquette
23. A Companion to Early Modern Philosophy
Edited by Steven Nadler
24. A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages
Edited by Jorge J. E. Gracia and Timothy B. Noone
25. A Companion to African-American Philosophy
Edited by Tommy L. Lott and John P. Pittman
26. A Companion to Applied Ethics
Edited by R. G. Frey and Christopher Heath Wellman
27. A Companion to the Philosophy of Education
Edited by Randall Curren
28. A Companion to African Philosophy
Edited by Kwasi Wiredu
29. A Companion to Heidegger
Edited by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall
30. A Companion to Rationalism
Edited by Alan Nelson
31. A Companion to Pragmatism
Edited by John R. Shook and Joseph Margolis
32. A Companion to Ancient Philosophy
Edited by Mary Louise Gill and Pierre Pellegrin
33. A Companion to Nietzsche
Edited by Keith Ansell Pearson
34. A Companion to Socrates
Edited by Sara Ahbel-Rappe and Rachana Kamtekar
35. A Companion to Phenomenology and Existentialism
Edited by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall
36. A Companion to Kant
Edited by Graham Bird
37. A Companion to Plato
Edited by Hugh H. Benson
38. A Companion to Descartes
Edited by Janet Broughton and John Carriero
39. A Companion to the Philosophy of Biology
Edited by Sahotra Sarkar and Anya Plutynski
40. A Companion to Hume
Edited by Elizabeth S. Radcliffe
41. A Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography
Edited by Aviezer Tucker
42. A Companion to Aristotle
Edited by Georgios Anagnostopoulos
43. A Companion to the Philosophy of Technology
Edited by Jan-Kyrre Berg Olsen, Stig Andur Pedersen, and Vincent F. Hendricks
44. A Companion to Latin American Philosophy
Edited by Susana Nuccetelli, Ofelia Schutte, and Otávio Bueno
45. A Companion to the Philosophy of Literature
Edited by Garry L. Hagberg and Walter Jost
46. A Companion to the Philosophy of Action
Edited by Timothy O'Connor and Constantine Sandis
47. A Companion to Relativism
Edited by Steven D. Hales
48. A Companion to Hegel
Edited by Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur
49. A Companion to Schopenhauer
Edited by Bart Vandenabeele
50. A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy
Edited by Steven M. Emmanuel
51. A Companion to Foucault
Edited by Christopher Falzon, Timothy O'Leary, and Jana Sawicki
52. A Companion to the Philosophy of Time
Edited by Heather Dyke and Adrian Bardon
53. A Companion to Donald Davidson
Edited by Ernest Lepore and Kirk Ludwig
54. A Companion to Rawls
Edited by Jon Mandle and David Reidy
55. A Companion to W.V.O. Quine
Edited by Gilbert Harman and Ernest Lepore
56. A Companion to Derrida
Edited by Zeynep Direk and Leonard Lawlor
57. A Companion to David Lewis
Edited by Barry Loewer and Jonathan Schaffer
58. A Companion to Kierkegaard
Edited by Jon Stewart
59. A Companion to Locke
Edited by Matthew Stuart
60. The Blackwell Companion to Hermeneutics
Edited by Niall Keane and Chris Lawn
61. A Companion to Ayn Rand
Edited by Allan Gotthelf and Gregory Salmieri
62. The Blackwell Companion to Naturalism
Edited by Kelly James Clark
63. A Companion to Mill
Edited by Christopher Macleod and Dale E. Miller
64. A Companion to Experimental Philosophy
Edited by Justin Sytsma and Wesley Buckwalter
65. A Companion to Applied Philosophy
Edited by Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen, Kimberley Brownlee, and David Coady
66. A Companion to Wittgenstein
Edited by Hans-Johann Glock and John Hyman
67. A Companion to Simone de Beauvoir
Edited by Laura Hengehold and Nancy Bauer
68. A Concise Companion to Confucius
Edited by Paul R. Goldin
69. The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism
Edited by Jonathan J. Loose, Angus J. L. Menuge, and J. P. Moreland (Editor)
70. A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Philosophy
Edited by John Shand
71. A Companion to Atheism and Philosophy
Edited by Graham Oppy

A Companion to Atheism and Philosophy

Edited by
Graham Oppy

WILEY Blackwell

This edition first published 2019
© 2019 John Wiley & Sons Ltd

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as permitted by law. Advice on how to obtain permission to reuse material from this title is available at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

The right of Graham Oppy to be identified as the editor of the editorial material in this work has been asserted in accordance with law.

Registered Offices

John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA

John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

Editorial Office

9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

For details of our global editorial offices, customer services, and more information about Wiley products visit us at www.wiley.com.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some content that appears in standard print versions of this book may not be available in other formats.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty

While the publisher and authors have used their best efforts in preparing this work, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this work and specifically disclaim all warranties, including without limitation any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives, written sales materials or promotional statements for this work. The fact that an organization, website, or product is referred to in this work as a citation and/or potential source of further information does not mean that the publisher and authors endorse the information or services the organization, website, or product may provide or recommendations it may make. This work is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering professional services. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a specialist where appropriate. Further, readers should be aware that websites listed in this work may have changed or disappeared between when this work was written and when it is read. Neither the publisher nor authors shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Oppy, Graham, 1960– editor.

Title: A companion to atheism and philosophy / edited by Graham Oppy.

Description: First Edition. | Hoboken : Wiley, 2019. | Series: Blackwell companions to philosophy ; 66 | Includes bibliographical references and index. |

Identifiers: LCCN 2019006681 (print) | LCCN 2019008444 (ebook) | ISBN 9781119119180 (Adobe PDF) | ISBN 9781119119227 (ePub) | ISBN 9781119119111 (hardcover)

Subjects: LCSH: Atheism. | Philosophy. | Philosophy and religion.

Classification: LCC BL2747.3 (ebook) | LCC BL2747.3 .C6175 2019 (print) | DDC 211/.8–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019006681>

Cover Design: Wiley

Cover Image: © Ramón Espelt Photography/Getty Images

Set in 10/12.5pt Photina by SPi Global, Pondicherry, India

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

Notes on Contributors	viii
Acknowledgments	xii
Introduction	1
<i>Graham Oppy</i>	
Part I Individual Thinkers	13
1 Hume	15
<i>Jennifer Smalligan Marušić</i>	
2 Holbach	28
<i>Michael LeBuffe and Emilie Gourdon</i>	
3 Marx	43
<i>Vanessa Wills</i>	
4 Wollstonecraft	58
<i>Sandrine Bergès</i>	
5 Cady Stanton	71
<i>Claudette Fillard</i>	
6 Russell	83
<i>Carolyn Swanson</i>	
Part II Philosophical Movements	97
7 Empiricism	99
<i>Gregory Dawes</i>	
8 Pragmatism	111
<i>Robert Almeder</i>	

CONTENTS

9	Existentialism <i>Mariam Thalos</i>	123
10	Postmodernism <i>Christopher Watkin</i>	138
11	Naturalism <i>Eric Steinhart</i>	152
Part III Critiques of Theism		167
12	Logical Objections to Theism <i>Stephen Law</i>	169
13	Evidential Objections to Theism <i>Herman Philipse</i>	191
14	Normative Objections to Theism <i>Stephen Maitzen</i>	204
15	Prudential Objections to Theism <i>Guy Kahane</i>	216
Part IV Metaphysics		235
16	Freedom <i>Alfred Mele</i>	237
17	Supernatural <i>Berit Brogaard</i>	250
18	Death <i>Beth Seacord</i>	262
Part V Epistemology		275
19	Skepticism <i>Duncan Pritchard</i>	277
20	Methods of Science <i>Elliott Sober</i>	291
21	Evidence <i>Michael Tooley</i>	303
22	Evolution <i>Michael Ruse</i>	323

Part VI Ethics	341
23 Meta-Ethics <i>Elizabeth Tropman</i>	343
24 Meaning <i>Thaddeus Metz</i>	355
25 Normative Skepticism <i>Susana Nuccetelli</i>	367
Part VII Politics	381
26 Education <i>Jennifer Bleazby</i>	383
27 Happiness <i>Gregory S. Paul</i>	396
28 Violence <i>Steve Clarke</i>	421
29 Church and State <i>Cristina Lafont</i>	436
Part VIII Critiques of Atheism	449
30 Logical Objections to Atheism <i>Christopher Gregory Weaver</i>	451
31 Evidential Objections to Atheism <i>Helen De Cruz</i>	476
32 Normative Objections to Atheism <i>C. Stephen Evans</i>	491
33 Prudential Objections to Atheism <i>Amanda Askill</i>	506
Bibliography	521
Index	565

Notes on Contributors

Robert Almeder is Distinguished Emeritus Philosopher from Georgia State University. He has published over one hundred peer-reviewed essays and 26 books focusing mostly on American philosophy, epistemology, philosophy of science and mind-body problem. He is a former editor of *The American Philosophical Quarterly*, and chaired for three years the Fulbright Foundation Committee on the Discipline of Philosophy. Recent books include *Truth and Skepticism* (2011), *Harmless Naturalism* (1999), 'Materialism, Reincarnation, and Cartesian Dualism' (under review).

Amanda Askill received her PhD in philosophy from New York University for a thesis on infinite ethics. Prior to this, she completed a BPhil in philosophy at the University of Oxford. Her research interests include ethics, formal epistemology, and decision theory.

Sandrine Bergès is an Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy at Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey. She is the author of the *Guidebook to Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (2013). co-editor with Alan Coffee of *The Social and Political Philosophy of Mary Wollstonecraft* (2016) and with Alan Coffee and Eileen Hunt Botting of *Wollstonecraftian Mind* (2016).

Jennifer Bleazby is a philosopher of education in the Faculty of Education, Monash University, Australia. She is the author of *Social Reconstruction Learning: Dualism, Dewey and Philosophy in Schools* (2013) and an editor of the forthcoming collection, *Theory and Philosophy in Educational Research: Methodological Dialogues* (2017).

Berit Brogaard is professor of philosophy at University of Miami and the Director of the Brogaard Lab for Multisensory Research. Her areas of research include philosophy of perception, philosophy of emotion, philosophy of language and cognitive science. She is the author of the books *Transient Truths* (2012), *On Romantic Love* (2015), *The Superhuman Mind* (2015), and *Seeing & Saying* (2018).

Steve Clarke is an associate professor in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Charles Sturt University and a Senior Research Associate of the Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics, Charles Sturt University and a Senior Research Fellow in the Wellcome Centre for Ethics and Humanities, University of Oxford.

Gregory W. Dawes holds a joint professorial appointment in the departments of Philosophy and Theology & Religion at the University of Otago. He works in both the history and philosophy of religion, his books including *The Historical Jesus Question* (2001), *Theism and Explanation* (2009), *Galileo and the Conflict between Religion and Science* (2017), and *Philosophy, Religion and Knowledge* (2017).

Helen De Cruz is a senior lecturer in philosophy at Oxford Brookes University. Her areas of specialization are philosophy of religion and philosophy of cognitive science. She co-wrote *A Natural History of Natural Theology* (2015), also wrote *Religious Disagreement* (2019) and is currently writing a monograph entitled *The Significance of Religious Disagreement*.

C. Stephen Evans is University Professor of Philosophy at Baylor University and holds Professorial Fellow positions at Australian Catholic University and the University of St. Andrews. He is well-known as a Kierkegaard scholar, and his most recent books are *God and Moral Obligation* and *Natural Signs and Knowledge of God*.

Claudette Fillard is Professor Emeritus, having taught American Civilization and Literature, at Université Lumière-Lyon 2. She specialized in the history of American feminism and her research and publications eventually focused on Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

Emilie Gourdon is a doctoral student in history in the EHESS (Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales) in Paris. Her thesis, *Les réputations du Baron d'Holbach* investigates Holbach with an emphasis on the underground literature of the eighteenth century.

Guy Kahane is associate professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Oxford, and Fellow and tutor in philosophy at Pembroke College, Oxford. He is also Director of Studies at the Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics and Associate Editor of the *Journal of Practical Ethics*.

Cristina Lafont is professor of philosophy at Northwestern University. Her books include: *The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutic Philosophy* (1999), *Heidegger, Language and World-Disclosure* (2000), and *Global Governance and Human Rights* (2012).

Stephen Law is reader in philosophy at Heythrop College, University of London. He is the author of a number of books on philosophy including *The Philosophy Gym: 25 Short Adventures in Thinking* (2003) and *The Evil God Challenge* (forthcoming).

Michael LeBuffe is professor and Baier chair in early modern philosophy at the University of Otago. His works include *From Bondage to Freedom: Spinoza on Human Excellence* (2010) and *Spinoza on Reason* (2017).

Stephen Maitzen is the W. G. Clark professor of philosophy at Acadia University. His interests include vagueness and ontology; the concept of ultimacy in regard to being, value, and purpose; and the perennial pseudo-question 'Why is there something rather than nothing?' He has received Acadia's highest award for excellence in teaching.

Jennifer Smalligan Marušić is associate professor of philosophy at Brandeis University. She works primarily on early modern philosophy, especially Locke and Hume.

Alfred Mele is the William H. and Lucyle T. Werkmeister Professor of Philosophy at Florida State University. He is the author of 11 books and over 200 articles and the editor or co-editor of six books. He is past director of the Big Questions in Free Will project (2010–2013) and the Philosophy and Science of Self-Control project (2014–2017).

Thaddeus Metz is currently distinguished research professor of philosophy at the University of Johannesburg (2015–2019). Other recent works of his related to atheism and life's meaning include "Meaning of Life and Afterlife" (2017) and "God's Role in a Meaningful Life" (2018).

Susana Nuccetelli is professor of philosophy at St. Cloud State University in Minnesota. Besides essays in ethics and other core areas of philosophy, she has authored several monographs and co-edited *Ethical Naturalism: Current Debates* (2012) and *Themes from G. E. Moore* (2007).

Graham Oppy is Professor of Philosophy at Monash University, CEO of the Australasian Association of Philosophy, and a member of the Council of the Australian Academy of Humanities. He has published a wide range of books in philosophy of religion, including *Naturalism and Religion*, *Atheism and Agnosticism*, and *Reading Philosophy of Religion*, and has recently focused on the development of atheistic and naturalistic understandings of religion.

Gregory S. Paul is a freelance author and illustrator. He is well-known for his work in palaeontology as well as for his work in philosophy of religion. He is the author and illustrator of *Predatory Dinosaurs of the World* (1988), *The Complete Illustrated Guide to Dinosaur Skeletons* (1996), *Dinosaurs of the Air* (2002), and *The Princeton Field Guide to Dinosaurs* (2010).

Herman Philipse is distinguished professor of philosophy at Utrecht University, The Netherlands. His main books in English are: *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being. A Critical Interpretation* (1998), and *God in the Age of Science? A Critique of Religious Reason* (2012).

Duncan Pritchard is Chancellor's professor of philosophy at the University of California, Irvine, and professor of philosophy at the University of Edinburgh. His monographs include *Epistemic Luck* (2005), *The Nature and Value of Knowledge* (co-authored, 2010), *Epistemological Disjunctivism* (2012), and *Epistemic Angst* (2015).

Michael Ruse is the Lucyle T. Werkmeister professor of philosophy and director of the program in the history and philosophy of science at Florida State University. He is the author of *Atheism: What Everyone Needs to Know* and co-editor of the *Oxford Handbook to Atheism*.

Beth Seacord is professor of philosophy at the College of Southern Nevada. She specializes in ethics, applied ethics, and philosophy of religion. Her doctoral dissertation, from the University of Colorado at Boulder, is titled *Unto the Least of These: Animal Suffering and the Problem of Evil*.

Elliott Sober is Hans Reichenbach professor and William F. Vilas research professor at University of Wisconsin, Madison. His books include: *Unto Others: The Evolution and Psychology of Unselfish Behaviour* (co-author David S. Wilson); *Evidence and Evolution: The Logic behind the Science*; *Ockham's Razors: A User's Manual*; and *Did Darwin write the Origin Backwards?*

Eric Steinhart is professor of philosophy at William Paterson University. His recent books includes: *Your Digital Afterlives: Computational Theories of Life after Death* and *More Precisely: The Math You need to do Philosophy*. He writes on new and emerging religious movements as well as on computational philosophy.

Carolyn Swanson is the chair of the philosophy department at Vancouver Island University. Her recent book, *Reburial of Non-Existents*, explores Bertrand Russell's theory of descriptions and general philosophy of language. However, her appreciation for Russell has expanded to his more popular works on religion and social issues.

Mariam Thalos is distinguished professor and head of the philosophy department, University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She is in the first instance a philosopher of science, with interests that touch on the largest and most time-honoured philosophical questions about how to live. Her work includes two monographs: *Without Hierarchy: The Scale Freedom of the Universe* (2013) and *A Social Theory of Freedom* (2016). She is working currently on a book on reasoning construed in its broadest sense, and another on the Self, intended for a wide readership.

Michael Tooley is an emeritus professor in the philosophy department of the University of Colorado, was president of the Australasian Association of Philosophy in 1983–1984, and president of the American Philosophical Association, Pacific Division, in 2010–2011. His current research interests are in metaphysics – mainly in the philosophy of time and causation – and in epistemology, where he is working on the justification of induction as part of a general refutation of skepticism.

Elizabeth Tropman is professor of philosophy at Colorado State University. Her research focuses on ethics and meta-ethics, with specific attention to moral realism, moral epistemology, and moral intuitionism.

Christopher Watkin is senior lecturer in French studies at Monash University, Melbourne, Australia. He has published widely on modern and contemporary French thought, including *French Philosophy Today* (2016) and *Difficult Atheism* (2011). He blogs on French philosophy and the academic life at www.christopherwatkin.com.

Christopher Gregory Weaver is assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He received his PhD in Philosophy from Rutgers University (2015) where he completed his dissertation *Essays on Causation, Explanation, and the Past Hypothesis* under Barry Loewer (chair), David Albert, Tom Banks (physicist), and Jonathan Schaffer. He has published peer-reviewed articles in such venues as the *Journal for General Philosophy of Science*, *Synthese*, and the *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion*.

Vanessa Wills is assistant professor of philosophy at The George Washington University. Her areas of specialization are moral, social, and political philosophy, nineteenth-century German philosophy (especially Karl Marx), and the philosophy of race. Her research is importantly informed by her study of Marx's work, and focuses on the ways in which economic and social arrangements can inhibit or promote the realization of values such as freedom, equality, and human development.

Acknowledgments

There are many people who have contributed to the production of this *Companion*.

Liam Cooper wrote to me in July 2014, to float a proposal for a *Companion to Atheist Philosophy*. After extensive discussion and consultation, a contract for a *Companion to Atheism and Philosophy* was signed in February, 2015. Although Liam moved on from Wiley-Blackwell – to pursue teaching philosophy for children – in May 2015, he left an indelible mark on the *Companion*. I am grateful for his suggestion to put the work together, and for his sage advice during the initial stages of its development.

Thirty-five philosophers have contributed the chapters that make up this work. I am indebted to all of them for their hard work and enthusiasm, and for the superb material that they have provided. This *Companion* is a unique contribution to contemporary philosophy of religion which, I hope, suggests directions that it would be good for the discipline of philosophy of religion to pursue. I hope that all of the 35 are as pleased with, and as proud of, the collective work as I am.

The development of the work has been brilliantly supported by a team of people at Wiley-Blackwell, including Deirdre Ilkson, Marissa Koors, Bridget Jennings, Emily Corkhill, and Manish Luthra. As with any project of this size, there have been ups and downs along the way. Lynne Rudder Baker was to have contributed a chapter, but ill-health forced her to withdraw; it is a matter of great sadness that she did not live to see the volume go to print. Several other slated contributions also did not make it across the line. All members of the team at Wiley-Blackwell have been very generous in their accommodation of the challenges thrown up to them.

Many others have supported me during the production of this work. I have a very deep appreciation of the support provided by everyone at Monash University: my colleagues in the Department of Philosophy, the School of Philosophical, Historical and International Studies, the Faculty of Arts, and the wider university community. I am particularly grateful for the sabbatical that I enjoyed during the second half of 2017; this work is one of several major projects that I was able to finally square away during that time.

As always, my greatest debt is to friends and family. As I write these words, two of my sons – Calvin and Alfie – are traveling overseas, taking advantage of Monash University's generous provisions for study abroad. When they return, I may be in the unusual position of not having any book manuscripts in preparation; at any rate, as I write these words, my slate is very nearly clean. This book is for those now at home as well as for those now abroad: Camille, Gilbert, Calvin and Alfie.

Introduction

GRAHAM OPPY

This *Companion* examines philosophical discussion of atheism. In this Introduction, I shall provide an overview of the work and some preliminary discussion of foundational questions.

It is worth noting at the outset that the overarching aim of the *Companion* is to provide a discussion of some philosophically controversial questions about atheism. It is not the aim of the *Companion* to provide a comprehensive discussion of philosophically controversial questions about atheism; nor is it its aim to provide a merely partisan survey of philosophy and atheism.

The preliminary discussion of foundational questions considers (a) the characterization of atheism; (b) the history of atheism; (c) the broad sweep of objections to atheism; and (d) what might be hoped for in connection with arguments about atheism. The remarks made under each of these headings are all brief, but, in some cases, controversial.

Overview

The work is divided into eight parts: (1) Individual Thinkers; (2) Philosophical Movements; (3) Critiques of Theism; (4) Metaphysics; (5) Epistemology; (6) Ethics; (7) Politics; and (8) Critiques of Atheism.

The first part – “Individual Thinkers” – considers a range of thinkers who are often said to be atheists but whose views about gods are open to philosophical interpretation. In some cases, dispute about classification of thinkers is a result of dispute about the characterization of atheism itself; in other cases, dispute arises because of lack of attention to the writings of the thinkers in question. There are many other intrinsically interesting thinkers who might have been discussed in this part of the book. For a different line-up, devised for a similar end, see Oppy (2018): Ajita Kesakambali,

Diagoras of Melos, Wang Chong, Abu-L-Ala al-Ma'arri, Jean Meslier, Paul-Henri d'Holbach, Mary Ann Evans, Emma Goldman, Eric Blair, Margaret Kennedy, Maryam Namazie, and Agomo Atambire.

The second part – “Philosophical Movements” – considers a range of philosophical positions that have often been taken to have clear and straightforward implications for atheism but where the existence of such implications is open to philosophical dispute. As in the first part of this work, philosophical dispute is sometimes the outcome of disagreement about the characterization of atheism; but, often enough, it arises from lack of attention to the writings of relevant groups of philosophers.

The third part – “Critiques of Theism” – looks at different kinds of objections to theism: logical objections, evidential objections, normative objections, and prudential objections. Some of the objections that are examined, if successful, would provide grounds for atheism; other objections that are examined, if successful, might only provide grounds for agnosticism.

The fourth part – “Metaphysics” – takes up some metaphysical topics that have sometimes been taken to have clear implications for atheism: freedom, death, and the supernatural. There are, of course, many other metaphysical topics that have sometimes been taken to have clear implications for atheism. The topics represented here are chosen merely as representatives of the wider range of intrinsically interesting metaphysical topics that have sometimes been taken to have clear implications for atheism. Other topics that might have been taken up in this part include: abstract objects, causation, cosmological origins, function, mathematics, mind, and reason.

The fifth part – “Epistemology” – takes up some epistemological topics that have sometimes been taken to have clear implications for atheism: skepticism, methods of science, evidence, and evolutionary theory. Again, there are many other epistemological topics that have sometimes been taken to have clear implications for atheism. The topics represented here are chosen merely as representatives of the wider range of intrinsically interesting epistemological topics that have sometimes been taken to have clear implications for atheism. Other topics that might have been taken up include: divination, expert disagreement, miracle reports, scripture, and superstition. Some of the topics in Parts 4 and 5 could be considered both from the standpoint of metaphysics and from the standpoint of epistemology; assignment indicates merely where the weight of discussion in relevant chapters lies.

The sixth part – “Ethics” – takes up some topics in ethics that have sometimes been taken to have clear implications for atheism: meta-ethics, meaning, and normative skepticism. Other topics that might have been taken up in this part include: applied ethics, conscience, consequentialism, moral realism, normative ethics, welfare and virtue and flourishing.

The seventh part – “Politics” – takes up some topics in political philosophy that have sometimes been taken to have clear implications for atheism: education, happiness, violence, and separation of church and state. Other topics that might have been taken up in this part include: autonomy, conservatism, liberalism, and principles of justice. Some of the topics in Parts 6 and 7 could be considered both from the standpoint of ethics and from the standpoint of political philosophy; assignment indicates merely where the weight of discussion in relevant chapters lies.

The eighth part – “Objections to Atheism” – looks at different kinds of objections to atheism: logical objections, evidential objections, normative objections and prudential objections. Some of the objections that are examined, if successful, would provide grounds for theism; other objections that are examined, if successful, might only provide grounds for agnosticism.

Characterization of Atheism

The characterization of atheism is much contested. I shall give my favored account of the relevant vocabulary; I shall also discuss alternatives. It should be noted that no interpretation of terms was recommended to the contributing authors; all have used the relevant terms as they see fit.

Atheism is the claim that there are no gods. *Atheists* believe that that are no gods.

Atheistic worldviews say – by direct inclusion or entailment – that there are no gods.

Theism is the claim that there is at least one god. *Theists* believe that there is at least one god. *Theistic worldviews* say – by direct inclusion or entailment – that there is at least one god. (Some monotheists say that God is not a god. Those who wish to speak this way should take appropriate disjunctive amendments as read: for example, atheists claim that there are no gods and there is no God. It is simpler *not* to talk this way. And talking in my preferred way carries no implications about commonalities between God and other things: necessarily, if God exists, then there are no *other* gods.)

Agnosticism is suspension of judgment on the claim that there is at least one god.

Agnostics, despite having given consideration to the question whether there is at least one god, neither believe that there is at least one god nor believe that there are no gods. *Agnostic worldviews* say neither that there is at least one god nor that there are no gods, despite saying other things about gods – for example that some people believe that there is at least one god.

Innocence is absence of acquaintance with the claim that there is at least one god.

Innocents do not have any thoughts about gods; hence, in particular, innocents neither believe that there is at least one god nor believe that there are no gods. *Innocent worldviews* say nothing at all about gods, not even, for example, that some people believe that there is at least one god. In the typical case, innocents do not understand what it would be for something to be a god: they lack the concepts upon which such understanding depends. Examples of innocents include: human neonates, chimpanzees, humans with grievous brain injuries, and humans with advanced neurological disorders.

The fourfold classification – atheism, theism, agnosticism, innocence – instantiates a fourfold classification that applies to all propositions. For any proposition that *p*, there are those who believe that *p*, those who believe that not *p*, those who suspend judgment whether that *p*, and those who stand in no doxastic relationship to the proposition that *p*. Indeed, while the terms *atheism* and *theism* are keyed to the proposition that there are

no gods, in other contexts the terms *agnosticism* and *innocence* can be broadly keyed to more or less any propositions. (Some may think that we need to add another term to cover those benighted subjects who have conflicting attitudes towards a single proposition, for example, both believing that there are no gods and believing that there are gods. If we need a term, then ‘confusion’ will do as well as any. I shall ignore this case in the subsequent discussion.)

Some reject the fourfold classification on the grounds that talk about gods is meaningless: given that the claim that there are no gods is meaningless, there is no proposition whose belief is characteristic of atheism. But it is self-defeating to assert that *the claim that there are no gods is meaningless*: if what is asserted is meaningful, then it is false; and, if what is asserted isn’t meaningful, then it cannot be used to characterize a competing philosophical position. Moreover, there are many claims – claims that we are all inclined to accept – which would be meaningless if it were meaningless to say that there are no gods: *some people believe that there are gods*; *some people deny that there are gods*; *many people suppose that, if there are gods, then those gods do not belong to the Norse pantheon*; and so on. And, in any case, if talk about gods is meaningless, why not then say that the claim that there are gods is false? After all, if talk about gods is meaningless, then surely there are no gods!

There are many things that some people wish to load into the meaning of the term *atheism*: some require atheists to take themselves to *know* that there are no gods; some require atheists to take themselves to have *proof* that there are no gods; some require atheists to be *certain* that there are no gods; some require atheists to be absolutely *fixed* in their belief that there are no gods; some require atheists to *want* it to be the case that there are no gods; some require atheists to *care* whether there are gods; some require atheists to regard those who take different attitudes towards the proposition that there are no gods – theists and agnostics – as irrational and/or unreflective and/or unintelligent and/or ill-informed; and so on. Rather than load more into the term *atheist* – and into the terms *theist* and *agnostic* – we do better to remember that we can attach modifiers to these terms: atheists, agnostics and theists alike *can be* arrogant, dogmatic, ill-informed, irrational, superficial, unintelligent, and so forth.

There are many positions that, at least in some quarters, are routinely taken to be essential to atheism: some suppose that all atheists are committed to *materialism*, the view that there are none but material causal entities with none but material causal powers, where well-established science is our touchstone for identifying causal entities and causal powers; some suppose that all atheists are committed to *physicalism*, the view that there are none but physical causal entities with none but physical causal powers, where well-established physics is our touchstone for identifying causal entities and causal powers; some suppose that all atheists are committed to *naturalism*, the view that there are none but natural causal entities with none but natural causal powers, where well-established natural science is our touchstone for identifying causal entities and causal powers; some suppose that all atheists are committed to *skepticism*, the view that there is very little that we are rationally justified in believing (about, for example, the external world, other minds, the extent of the past, morality, modality, meaning, and so on); some suppose that all atheists are committed to *nihilism*, the view that nothing has any meaning or value; some suppose that all atheists are *fundamentalists* who take particular texts, teachings, and ideologies to be true under strictly literal interpretation

which grounds conservative insistence on the maintenance of in-group/out-group distinctions; some suppose that all atheists are *communists* who wish to establish a socio-economic order in which there are no social classes, states, or currencies and in which there is common ownership of the means of production; some suppose that all atheists are *fascists* who endorse radical nationalism premised on violent elimination of “decadent elements,” national reconstruction that reverses alleged decline, humiliation, and victimization, and valorization of youth, masculinity, and dictatorial charismatic leaders; some suppose that all atheists are *antitheists* who hate gods; some suppose that all atheists are *religious zealots* who fail to recognize their own religiosity; and so on. I take it to be obvious that all of these generalizations are false. Some atheists are religious; some atheists are religious zealots; some atheists are fascists; some atheists are communists; some atheists are nihilists; some atheists are skeptics; some atheists are naturalists; some atheists are physicalists; and some atheists are materialists. But one can believe that there are no gods without being any of these things.

Some wish to distinguish different kinds of atheism: some distinguish between ‘strong’ – ‘hard’, ‘positive’ – atheism and ‘weak’ – ‘soft’, ‘negative’ – atheism. But, given that atheists can differ in all of the ways discussed in the preceding two paragraphs, and in many other ways as well, it is very hard to believe that any useful purpose could be served by stipulation of a context-independent distinction between strong atheism and weak atheism. In particular, it seems to me to be a mistake to use a distinction between strong atheism and weak atheism to subsume agnosticism under atheism: strong atheists reject the claim that there are gods, while weak atheists refrain from accepting the claim that there are gods. For, if we accept that there is this distinction between strong atheism and weak atheism, we should surely accept that there is a similar distinction between strong theism and weak theism: strong theists reject the claim that there are no gods, while weak theists merely refrain from accepting the claim that there are no gods. And then we shall have it that agnostics are both weak atheists and weak theists.

Some wish to treat *atheism* as a context-sensitive term: one is or is not an atheist only relative to some contextually delimited class of gods. On this proposal, given appropriate contextual delimitation, pagan Romans can be strictly said to be atheists by believers in the Christian God, and Christian Romans can be strictly said to be atheists by worshippers of the pagan gods. While there is a long history of use of the term *atheist* – and its equivalents in other languages – to denigrate or abuse those who do not accept the gods of the speaker, it is quite clear that the standard – though perhaps distinctively modern – application of the term is to those who, for every possible contextual delimitation of a class of gods, insist that there are no such gods. When contemporary census papers arrive with a list of checkboxes attached to a question about religious identification, the inclusion of both “other” and “atheist” on the list does *not* mark some kind of conceptual or linguistic confusion on the part of those who formulate the questions that are contained in the census.

Historical use of the term *atheist* – and its equivalents in other languages – throws up other challenges. In Western Europe, in the early modern period, it was a commonplace in some intellectual circles that there could not be reasoned, reflective, thoughtful rejection of the existence of the Christian God; there could not be “theoretical atheists.” Instead, according to the views maintained in those circles, there could only be “practical atheists”: those who, while well aware of the existence of the Christian God, acted as

though the Christian God did not exist because of defects of character: pride, or greed, or sloth, or the like (see Berman 1988: 2). Much more recently, in some intellectual circles, a view has arisen that there cannot be reasoned, reflective, thoughtful acceptance of the existence of gods: there cannot be “theoretical theists.” Instead, according to the views maintained in those circles, there can only be “practical theists”: those who, while aware at some level that there are no gods, act as though there are gods because of defects of character: cowardice, or resentment, or self-loathing, or self-pity, or sentimentality, or servility, or the like (see Rey 2007). I do not think that any good comes from preserving theoretical/practical distinctions for atheism, theism, and agnosticism in philosophical theorizing.

Historical Considerations

Given that atheists are those who suppose that there are no gods, it is not easy to trace the historical contours of atheism. In most times and places, there has been serious risk attendant on denial of the existence of locally popular gods. In most times and places, if there have been atheists, they have had good prudential reasons to keep their view to themselves. While, as we have already noted, accusing others of atheism has been a popular pastime throughout recorded history, it is typically impossible to determine whether those at whom the accusations are directed believe that there are no gods rather than merely believing that the locally popular gods do not exist.

There are ancient candidates for atheism. It seems plausible that the Cārvākas were atheists; it seems very likely that Ajita Kesakambali was an atheist. This case aside, it is hard to find any uncontroversial cases of atheism prior to its appearance in Western Europe in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. While claims have been made for Diagoras of Melos, Wang Chong, and Abu-L-Ala al-Ma’arri, among others, the best that can be said, I think, is that we cannot be sure. However, it is likely that Matthias Knutzen and Kazimierz Łyszczyński were atheists, and uncontroversial that Jean Meslier was an atheist. Knutzen is reported to have published three atheist tracts in Jena in 1674, after which he vanished into history; Łyszczyński is reported to have been beheaded in Warsaw in 1689 for his authorship of a treatise on the non-existence of God; and Meslier, who died in 1729, certainly authored a posthumously circulated *Testament* in which he defends atheism, materialism, hedonism, anarchism, and internationalism.

It is an interesting question why atheism became visible in public in Western Europe at the time that it did. In the 1660s, in England, repeated public affirmation of atheism was a capital offence; in the 1770s, authors in England started to put their own names to atheist publications. I suspect that the eventual emergence of public atheism was the conclusion of a very long slow burn that can be traced back to the beginnings of the second millennium.

From the eleventh century until the Reformation, there were localized agitations for reform of Church and clergy, by, for example, Patarines, Bogomils, Waldensians, Cathars, Dulcinians, Lollards, and Hussites; these were typically terminated with extreme prejudice by Church-backed nobility, leaving longstanding enmities as their legacies. In the Church schools, there was a significant broadening of curriculum that

began with the reception of ancient texts preserved in the Islamic world and continued with the emergence of Renaissance humanism. More broadly, the aftermath of the Black Death, the Western Schism, the rise of professional armies, and the associated rise of proto-nationalism all contributed to a redistribution of political power away from the nobility and the Church and towards ruling monarchs. The Reformation, Council of Trent, and Counter Reformation triggered a bloodbath that engulfed much of Western Europe; the Westphalian treaties established a new political order based on national self-determination. Given the role that religious differences played in the bloodbath, many intellectuals came to question organized religion; deism, inaugurated by Herbert of Cherbury, became firmly established in many intellectual circles. From Copernicus to Newton, there was an enormous flowering of scientific advances that encouraged confidence in the power of human beings to understand and improve the world without religious assistance, and, in some cases, despite religious resistance. The European circumnavigation of the globe, and the subsequent centuries of European colonization brought knowledge of the diversity of human religious and social practices to European thinkers, and provoked serious questions about the universality of European religion. In the shadows of the European wars of religion, other intellectuals joined deists in supporting calls for religious toleration, secular states, public education, penal reform, and the abolition of slavery. The lack of enthusiasm for all of these things on the part of the churches raised new questions for a wider public about the moral authority of those churches. While, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Church-backed states still had enough public support for brutal suppression of atheism – as in the case of Łyszczyński – the balance of public opinion swung sufficiently in the middle part of the eighteenth century to allow atheists to feel confident that they would not be put to death by the state merely for affirmation of their opinions. And, in upper-class circles, d'Holbach's coterie did much to establish the respectability of atheism as an intellectual option across most of Western Europe. Of course, this account is hopelessly brief and superficial. However, there must be some way of filling it out that explains the flowering of atheism – and agnosticism, and free thought more broadly – in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The period between the French Revolution and World War I has often been described as a golden age for atheism, agnosticism, and free thought in the global West. It is worth listing some of the nineteenth-century atheists and free thinkers who made notable contributions to the development and promotion of atheism and atheistic worldviews: Francis Abbott (1836–1903), Robert Adams (1839–1892), Jane Addams (1860–1935), Matthilde Anneke (1817–1884), Mikhael Bakunin (1814–1876), John Ballance (1831–1893), Bruno Bauer (1809–1882) Frank Baum (1856–1919), Derobigne Bennett (1818–1882), Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), Vissarian Berlinskii (1811–1848), Lillie Blake (1833–1913), Hypatia Bonner (1858–1935), Charles Bradlaugh (1833–1891), Georg Brandes (1842–1927), George Brown (1858–1915), Ludwig Büchner (1824–1899), Georg Büchner (1813–1837), Richard Carlile (1790–1843), Lydia Child (1802–1880), Samuel Clemens (1835–1910), William Collins (1853–1923), Auguste Comte (1798–1857), Moncure Conway (1882–1907), Viroqua Daniels (1859–1942), Voltairine De Cleyre (1866–1912), Eduard Dekker (1820–1887) Frederick Douglass (1818–1895), Emile Durkheim (1858–1917),

Friedrich Engels (1820–1895), Marian Evans (George Eliot) (1819–1880), Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872), Edward Bliss Foote (1829–1906), Edward Bond Foote (1854–1912), Helen Gardener (1853–1925), Ella Gibson (1821–1901), Charlotte Gilman (1860–1935), William Godwin (1756–1836), Emma Goldman (1869–1940), John Gott (1866–1923), Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919), Lillian Harmon (1869–1925), Moses Harmon (1830–1910), Karl Hartmann (1842–1906), Josephine Henry (1846–1928), Henry Hetherington (1792–1849), Ezra Heywood (1829–1893), Julian Hibbert (1801–1834), Austin Holyoake (1826–1874), George Holyoake (1817–1906), William Hone (1780–1842), Elbert Hubbard (1856–1915), Jacob Ilive (1705–1763), Charles James (1846–1911), Abner Kneeland (1774–1844), Charles Knowlton (1800–1850), Mattie Krekel (1840–1921), Pëtr Kropotkin (1842–1921), Harriet Law (1831–1897), Henry Lea (1825–1909), Émile Littré (1801–1881), Alfred Loisy (1857–1919), George MacDonald (1857–1937), Emma Martin (1812–1851), Harriet Martineau (1802–1876), Karl Marx (1818–1883), Josiah Mendum (1811–1891), Chilton Moore (1837–1906), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), Benjamin Offen (1771–1848), Robert Owen (1771–1858), Robert D. Owen (1801–1877), Hugh Pentecost (1848–1907), Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865); Samuel Putnam (1838–1896), Charles Reynolds (1832–1896), Marilla Ricker (1842–1920), John Robertson (1856–1933), Charles Robinson (1818–1894), Ernestine Rose (1810–1891), Horace Seaver (1810–1889), Etta Semple (1855–1914), Juliet Severance (1833–1919), Eliza Sharples (1805?–1852), Percy Shelley (1792–1822), Elmina Slenker (1827–1908), Katie Smith (1868–1895), Charles Southwell (1814–1860), Elizabeth Stanton (1815–1902), Max Stirner (1806–1856), Robert Stout (1844–1930), David Strauss (1808–1874), Joseph Symes (1841–1906), Robert Taylor (1784–1844), Benjamin Underwood (1839–1914), Lois Waisbrooker (1826–1909), Thaddeus Wakeman (1834–1913), Thomas Walker (1858–1932), Lemuel Washburn (1846–1927) James Watson (1799–1874), Charles Watts Sr. (1836–1906), Charles Watts Jr. (1858–1946), Kate Watts (1849–1924), John Watts (1834–1866), Max Weber (1864–1920), Richard Westbrook (1820–1899), Joseph Wheeler (1850–1898), Walt Whitman (1819–1892), William Whittick (1847–1897), Susan Wixon (c.1850–1912), Thomas Wooler (1786–1853), Elizur Wright (1804–1885), and Frances Wright (1795–1852). Among these figures, there were abolitionists, anarchists, bible critics, birth-control advocates, church–state separatists, editors, entertainers, feminists, journalists, novelists, pamphleteers, poets, politicians, publishers, sex educators, sex radicals, social reformers, suffragettes, and writers. All were engaged, in one way or another, in the broad project of developing atheistic worldviews and figuring out ways to live consistent with those atheistic worldviews.

The contrast between the period prior to 1770 and the period after 1770 is stark. When Hume dined with Holbach's coterie, he asked his host whether he knew of anyone who was genuinely an atheist, and was quite surprised to learn that he was in the presence of more than a dozen people who self-identified as atheists. Within a few short decades, there were significant numbers of people *openly* self-identifying as atheists across significant sectors of society, and – in most of Western Europe – those who did so were not made to fear for their lives in consequence, though, for quite some time, many were still made to worry about their public reputations.

Objections to Atheism

According to Psalm 14:1, “The Fool says in his heart ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none that does good.” Many common stereotypes of atheists agree with the Psalmist. Widely shared stereotypical beliefs about atheists and atheism include all of the following:

- atheists are irrational;
- atheists are ignorant;
- atheists are immoral;
- atheists are horrible;
- atheists are untrustworthy;
- atheists are criminals;
- atheists have no values;
- atheists do not believe in anything;
- atheists are selfish;
- atheists are unhappy;
- atheists hate god;
- atheists are sexually deviant;
- atheists are physically unhealthy;
- atheists have low life expectancy;
- atheists are fundamentalists;
- atheists are political ideologues;
- atheists are anti-religion;
- atheism is just another religion;
- atheism is unliveable;
- atheism is self-defeating;
- atheism is defeated by logic;
- atheism is defeated by evidence;
- atheism is defeated by evaluative considerations;
- atheism is defeated by pragmatic considerations.

Many of these claims are open to empirical investigation. However, until very recently, most relevant social scientific research has focused on those who fail to believe that there are gods rather than on those who believe that there are no gods. Nonetheless, it seems fairly safe to say that, to the extent that these stereotypes have been subject to empirical investigation, the results of that research show (a) that these stereotypes are broadly accepted, even, in some cases, by atheists themselves, but (b) that there is no unambiguous empirical support for these stereotypes. While it is true, for example, that atheists are widely perceived to be less trustworthy than their religious peers, there is no evidence that atheists are more deserving of distrust than those religious peers.

Of course, not all of the claims listed above are decidable by merely social scientific investigation. Questions about rationality, morality, and defeat are, at least in part, normative questions. Insofar as stereotypical claims about atheists are expressions of normative and ideological commitments, those claims are immensely controversial.

Some – such as the claim that atheists are fundamentalists and the claim that atheism is just another religion – are, at best, products of conceptual confusion: no one who understands what religion and fundamentalism are could possibly endorse these claims. Others – such as the claim that atheism is self-defeating, or defeated by logic, or by evidence, or by evaluative considerations, or by pragmatic considerations – are properly philosophical, and the subject of extensive, ongoing dispute.

The stereotypical beliefs about atheists listed above are given detailed critical examination in Blackford and Schuklenk (2013) and Oppy (2018).

Arguing about Atheism

Argument about the existence of gods has occupied a central position in recent philosophy of religion. It is controversial whether argument about the existence of gods *ought* to occupy this central position. It is not controversial that philosophy of religion should be interested in worldview differences about religious matters. But whether an interest in worldview differences about religious matters ought to manifest in scrutiny of arguments about the existence of gods is much less clear.

If we understand ‘argument’ in the technical sense that is common in recent philosophy of religion – according to which an argument is a collection of propositions, one of which is distinguished as conclusion and the rest are identified as premises – then it is doubtful that philosophy of religion ought to be focused on arguments for claims that are contested across worldviews. In particular, if we understand ‘argument’ in the technical sense just mentioned, then it is doubtful that arguments about the existence of gods should occupy a central position in philosophy of religion.

Of course, if we understand ‘argument’ in a more everyday sense – according to which any contribution to debate about worldview differences counts as provision of an argument – then, as noted above, it is not controversial that philosophy of religion should be centrally interested in arguments concerning worldview differences about religious matters. But, even in this more everyday sense, it is not clear that philosophy of religion should be centrally preoccupied with arguments about the existence of gods. Disagreement about which, if any, gods there are is only a small part of disagreement between worldviews: worldviews that agree that there are no gods disagree about an enormous range of other matters, as do worldviews that agree about which gods there are.

One important consequence of the points just made is that, when we compare particular atheistic worldviews with particular theistic worldviews, we should not get too hung up on the fact that there is disagreement between these worldviews on the question of whether there are gods. Of course, given that we are comparing theistic and atheistic worldviews, there is disagreement on that question; but, when we construct detailed elaborations of these worldviews, we may well find that it is both more interesting and more profitable to devote attention to the many other claims upon which they disagree.

There is not much that is entailed by the claim that there are no gods. In particular, there are few, if any, substantive metaphysical, or epistemological, or ethical, or political propositions that are entailed by the claim that there are no gods. Consequently, there is

not much that atheists are committed to merely by their endorsement of the claim that there are no gods. What atheists are committed to depends entirely upon the further claims that they accept. In order to argue for atheism (in the everyday sense of ‘argue’) – or to make informed criticism of atheism – we need to make a study of carefully articulated atheistic worldviews: we need to spell out the metaphysical, epistemological, ethical, political, and practical commitments of particular atheistic worldviews. When we make our arguments for – or give our criticisms of – atheistic worldviews, what we are primarily interested in is assessing whether there are carefully articulated theistic worldviews that are better – more virtuous – than the atheistic worldviews up for consideration. If we make a fair and thorough weighing, and come to the conclusion that the best atheistic worldviews are more virtuous than the best theistic worldviews, then there is no further question about our entitlement to the belief that there are no gods. If we make a fair and thorough weighing, and come to the conclusion that the best theistic worldviews are more virtuous than the best atheistic worldviews, then there is no further question about our entitlement to the belief that there are gods. And if we make a fair and thorough weighing, and come to the conclusion that it is neither the case that the best atheistic worldviews are more virtuous than the best theistic worldviews nor the case that the best theistic worldviews are more virtuous than the best atheistic worldviews, then there is no further question about our entitlement to suspension of belief on the question whether there are gods.

It does not follow from what I have just said that there can be no role for arguments (in the technical sense common in recent philosophy of religion) in the assessment of the virtues of worldviews. We might use arguments – derivations – to show that worldviews have commitments that have hitherto been unrecognized; in particular, we might use them to show that worldviews harbor hitherto unrecognized contradictions. But, if we are using arguments for either of these purposes, it must be that the premises of those arguments all belong to the worldview under assessment. A worldview is not impugned merely by the fact that it is committed to claims that are denied in competing worldviews. Moreover, worldviews are not impugned merely by the fact that, for all we know so far, those worldviews do, in fact, harbor contradictions. Those who claim that there are arguments that impugn particular worldviews or types of worldviews should put up or shut up: if you cannot derive a contradiction from claims all of which belong to a given worldview, then you have no argument (in the technical sense common in recent philosophy of religion) against that worldview.

For further discussion of the issues hinted at in this section, see Oppy (2015).

References

- Berman, D. (1988) *A History of Atheism in Britain*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Blackford, R. and Schuklenk, U. (2013) *50 Great Myths about Atheism*. Malden, MA: Wiley.
- Oppy, G. (2015) “What derivations cannot do.” *Religious Studies* 51: 323–333.
- Oppy, G. (2018) *Atheism: The Basics*. London: Routledge.
- Rey, G. (2007) “Meta-atheism: Religious avowal as self-deception” in L. Antony (ed.) *Philosophers without Gods: Meditations on Atheism and the Secular Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 243–265.

Part I

Individual Thinkers

1

Hume

JENNIFER SMALLIGAN MARUŠIĆ

In the final section of Hume's 1779 *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1947, hereafter DNR), Philo, the character who is widely believed to speak for Hume, claims that the dispute between theists and atheists is merely verbal. In other words, he denies that there is any genuine disagreement between atheists and theists. At most, he claims, theists and atheists have religious beliefs that differ in degree, rather than in kind. It is, of course, hard to see how this could possibly be right: surely there is more than a verbal dispute between someone who believes that God exists and someone who believes that there is no God. How could two beliefs be more flatly and plainly opposed than these?

Philo claims that the dispute between theists and atheists is merely verbal because it concerns "the degrees of any quality or circumstance" (DNR 12.7 217).¹ He explains: "Men may argue to all eternity, whether Hannibal be a great, or a very great, or a superlatively great man, what degree of beauty Cleopatra possessed, what epithet of praise Livy or Thucydides is entitled to, without bringing the controversy to any determination" (DNR 12.7 217). Similarly, he suggests, the dispute between theists and atheists is about whether the cause of order in the universe is very much like a human mind or intelligence or very little like a human mind or intelligence. Philo argues:

That the dispute concerning Theism is of this nature, and consequently is merely verbal, or perhaps, if possible, still more incurably ambiguous, will appear upon the slightest enquiry. I ask the Theist, if he does not allow, that there is a great and immeasurable, because incomprehensible difference between the *human* and the *divine* mind: the more pious he is, the more readily will he assent to the affirmative, and the more will he be disposed to magnify the difference: he will even assert, that the difference is of a nature which cannot be too much magnified. I next turn to the Atheist, who, I assert, is only nominally so, and can never possibly be in earnest; and I ask him, whether, from the coherence and apparent sympathy in all the parts of this world, there be not a certain degree of analogy among all the operations of Nature, in every situation and in every age; whether the rotting of a turnip, the generation of an animal, and the structure of human thought, be not energies

that probably bear some remote analogy to each other: it is impossible he can deny it: he will readily acknowledge it. Having obtained this concession, I push him still further in his retreat; and I ask him, if it be not probable, that the principle which first arranged, and still maintains order in this universe, bears not also some remote inconceivable analogy to the other operations of nature, and, among the rest, to the economy of human mind and thought. However reluctant, he must give his assent. Where then, cry I to both these antagonists, is the subject of your dispute? The Theist allows, that the original intelligence is very different from human reason: the Atheist allows, that the original principle of order bears some remote analogy to it. Will you quarrel, gentlemen, about the degrees, and enter into a controversy, which admits not of any precise meaning, nor consequently of any determination? (DNR 12.7 217–218)

One reason why Philo's claim is puzzling is that it is hard to know whether it is intended sincerely, and, therefore, whether it really represents Hume's views. For one thing, Philo's remark occurs just after what is widely known as Philo's Reversal, which comes at the start of the concluding section of the *Dialogues*. After spending much of the *Dialogues* engaged in a relentless attack on the evidential force of the argument from design for the existence of God, Philo suddenly seems to change directions. He now proclaims:

That the works of Nature bear a great analogy to the productions of art, is evident; and according to all the rules of good reasoning, we ought to infer, if we argue at all concerning them, that their causes have a proportional analogy. But as there are also considerable differences, we have reason to suppose a proportional difference in the causes; and in particular, ought to attribute a much higher degree of power and energy to the supreme cause, than any we have ever observed in mankind. Here then the existence of a DEITY is plainly ascertained by reason. (DNR 12.6 217)

Commentators disagree about what to make of remarks like these, and views range from treating them as sincere and expressing Hume's considered view to dismissing them as thoroughly ironic.

How seriously one takes the remarks about the dispute between theists and atheists being merely verbal depends at least in part on how one understands Philo's Reversal. This is because the claim that the dispute between theists and atheists is merely verbal seems to depend immediately on Philo's sudden insistence that the natural world *does* provide some evidence that the cause of order in the universe bears some, perhaps remote, analogy to a human mind. It is because Philo claims that atheists and theists *agree* that there is some degree of probability that there is some analogy between the cause of order in the universe and a human mind that their dispute is merely about the degree of a quality. In particular, their disagreement is about just how close or remote the analogy is.

Philo's claim is puzzling, though, for other reasons as well. First, why should disputes about the degrees of a quality be merely verbal? A dispute about whether Cleopatra was beautiful, very beautiful, or extremely beautiful is a dispute about what language most aptly describes her beauty, but it needn't be *merely* verbal. The subjects to such a dispute could genuinely disagree about just how beautiful she was. Similarly, surely someone who thinks that the analogy between the cause of order in the universe and a human

mind is very close disagrees genuinely with someone who claims that the analogy is very remote, and not merely about what language best describes the cause of order in the universe.

Finally, the atheist and the theist also disagree about how *probable* it is that the cause of order in the universe bears some analogy to a mind. What the theist takes to be very probable, the atheist takes to be much less probable. Hume seems to hold that this is another disagreement about the degree of a quality – in this case, the degree of probability. One possibility is that Philo assumes that the degree of probability and the degree of resemblance are not independent but systematically related. Both the atheist and the theist ought to allow that as the degree of resemblance decreases the probability that there is this degree of resemblance goes up.

What should we make of all this? It is tempting to begin a discussion of Hume and atheism by asking whether Hume was an atheist or an agnostic, or perhaps even some kind of theist. However, approaching the topic in this way risks overlooking some of Hume's more provocative and significant contributions to the philosophy of religion. Instead, we should start by considering what Hume thinks theism and atheism are: what makes one a theist or an atheist, and what is the significance of the difference between theism and atheism? One result of this investigation is that Hume does not view the distinction between theism and atheism as *the*, or perhaps even *a*, fundamental division in people's attitudes toward religion. Hume has a quite different way of thinking about religious attitudes, one that is perhaps unfamiliar to us, and one which, as we'll see, tends to emphasize different aspects of religion and religious experience.

This chapter has four parts. In the first, we consider various ways that Hume seems to distinguish between theism and atheism. I argue that we can best appreciate Hume's contribution to the philosophy of religion by recognizing in his work a range of forms of theism, rather than a sharp divide between theism and atheism. In the second part, we consider what Hume means by the phrase "true religion" and consider what Hume's attitude toward true religion is. In the third part, we consider Hume's position on the question of whether we have any evidence for the existence of a benevolent or morally good God, and I argue that Hume takes a harder line on the question of whether there is a moral God than he does on the question of whether there is a God with something resembling human intelligence. In the final part, we consider Hume's famous argument concerning miracles, with a particular focus on the relevance of this argument to theism.

Theism vs. Atheism

Philo's claim that the disagreement between theists and atheists is merely verbal presupposes that theism and atheism are both essentially tied to questions of cosmology. The dispute, whether merely verbal or not, is about the nature of the cause of the universe. This can be contrasted with religious belief in general. In the *Natural History of Religion* (NHR), Hume describes religious belief as the belief in "invisible, intelligent power" (NHR 2.1 37). But one can believe in such power, or powers, without having any views about cosmology. In fact, Hume refers to some polytheists as "superstitious atheists", since they believe in gods – invisible, intelligent powers – but have no views

about cosmology at all and “acknowledge no being, that corresponds to our idea of a deity” (NHR 2.4 44). Hume considers such polytheists to be atheists because they simply have never given any thought to the origins of the universe.

Theism, for Hume, then, is essentially a view about the origin or cause of the universe. One might think that a theist, for Hume, is someone who holds that the cause of the universe is a necessary being with the traditional divine attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, and perfect benevolence. However, there is good reason to think that this is not Hume’s view. For starters, in the *Dialogues*, Cleanthes, who defends the argument from design, gives up quite easily on the view that the divine attributes are infinite or perfect (DNR 11.1 203). He also denies that the deity is absolutely simple (DNR 4.3 159), and he argues that the claim that anything, including the deity, exists necessarily is incoherent (DNR 9.6 189). Nevertheless, there seems little doubt that Cleanthes is, in Hume’s mind, a genuine theist, so it follows that Hume does not think genuine theism requires belief in a being with infinite attributes of any sort, nor belief in a being who exists necessarily.

This is further confirmed by Hume’s remarks about superstitious monotheists in the *Natural History of Religion*. Hume suggests that most monotheists do not genuinely believe in the infinitude of God. He asks: “Will you say, that your deity is finite and bounded in his perfections; may be overcome by a greater force; is subject to human passions, pains, and infirmities; has a beginning, and may have an end?” (NHR 7.1 56). Hume thinks that most monotheists dare not answer such questions affirmatively, but “endeavour, by an affected ravishment and devotion, to ingratiate themselves with him [God]” (NHR 7.1 56). In cases like these, Hume continues, “the assent of the vulgar is merely verbal ... they are incapable of conceiving of those sublime qualities, which they seemingly attribute to the Deity” (NHR 7.1 56).

At the other extreme, merely believing in the existence of God seems not to be sufficient to make one a genuine theist. This is suggested by Tom Holden’s claim that Hume uses the name “God” as the proper name for whatever is picked out by the definite description, “the cause or causes of order in the universe” (2010, pp. 6–7). However, believing that the name “God” (understood in this way) has a referent hardly makes one a theist. Only those who deny that there is *any* cause of order in the universe or who simply have no views about cosmology, like the atheistic polytheists, lack a belief that there is some cause or causes of order in the universe. Holden observes that treating the name “God” in this way allows Hume to confidently assert that there is a God, while remaining entirely noncommittal on the question of what God’s attributes are.

What sort of belief about God’s nature – between these two extremes – would make one a genuine theist? One proposal is suggested by Lorne Falkenstein, who argues that for Hume, ‘true’ or ‘genuine’ religion is belief in a God who is worthy of worship (2009, p. 188). A genuine theist, then, would be someone who believes in a God – an original cause of order in the universe – who is worthy of our worship. A God worthy of worship is a morally good God, not merely a very powerful or highly intelligent one. In this case, Philo’s concession at the end of the *Dialogues* falls short of genuine theism, because he does not concede that it is probable that the original cause of order in the universe is morally good. We’ll consider in more detail Hume’s views about divine benevolence in the third section.

A different proposal about what Hume thinks constitutes genuine theism is suggested by Andre Willis. Willis (2014) also argues that Hume is a genuine theist, of a

sort, or at least that there is a form of genuine theism that is congenial to Hume's views about religion. Willis holds that "the 'God' of genuine theism is distinct from human beings (contra Hegel's Geist), takes no particular concern with human happiness or morality (contra Leibniz), takes no interest in the redemption of the world (contra Edwards), and has no anthropomorphic characteristics and attributes (contra Clarke)" (p. 83). This sort of theism amounts to a "basic belief in purposive order of the principles of human nature" (p. 83). Thus, the sort of genuine theism that Willis ascribes to Hume is much thinner than the theism of Cleanthes, who believes in an anthropomorphic God who is concerned with human happiness and morality.

Willis is right that Hume does at times seem to have a view of nature and particularly of human nature that is teleological. For example, in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, when he introduces the role of custom in explaining how we form beliefs about unobserved matters of fact, Hume writes: "Nature will always maintain her rights, and prevail in the end over any abstract reasoning whatsoever" (EHU 5.1.2 41). Similarly, in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume describes the principles of the association of ideas as a gentle force, and continues, "nature in a manner pointing out to every one those simple ideas, which are most proper to be united into a complex one" (T 1.1.4.1; SBN 10–11). In passages like these, Hume seems comfortable thinking about nature as having an authority or purpose in doing things. Of course, how seriously one should take such remarks, and what, if anything, in Hume's view, justifies thinking of nature in this teleological way, are difficult questions that I won't attempt to settle here.

Nevertheless, it is less clear whether such a general belief in purposive order could, in Hume's view, constitute a form of genuine theism. There are two main reasons Willis gives for thinking that it does. First, Willis argues that this belief in the purposiveness of nature grounds a religious outlook or attitude. (I'll turn to the specific sort of religious outlook that Willis thinks Hume recommends in the next section.) Second, if we take seriously Philo's suggestion that the dispute between theists and atheists is a dispute about the degrees of some quality, one can understand the genuine theism Willis finds in Hume as on a spectrum, a spectrum that includes both belief in a God with the traditional attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, and perfect benevolence, and who exercises particular influence and control over our lives in response to our behavior and attitudes (including our religious attitudes), as well as a general belief in a purposive order of nature, including of human nature. In other words, Hume seems to think of religion in terms of a range of theistic views or forms of theism, rather than in terms of a sharp boundary between theism and atheism. Whether Hume actually endorses some version of theism, as Willis suggests, is controversial, but, as we'll see, Hume is much more firmly opposed – for both epistemological and moral reasons – to some forms of theism than others.

True Religion

What Hume means by the phrase "true religion" is another difficult interpretative question, one related to, but nevertheless distinct from, the question what constitutes theism for Hume. Hume's writings on religion are peppered with approving remarks

about true religion. For example, in the final section of the *Dialogues*, Philo claims: “But in proportion to my veneration for true religion, is my abhorrence of vulgar superstitions” (DNR 12.9 219). Cleanthes replies to this when he claims:

Take care, Philo, ... push not matters too far: allow not your zeal against false religion to undermine your veneration for the true.... The most agreeable reflection, which it is possible for human imagination to suggest, is that of genuine Theism, which represents us as the workmanship of a Being perfectly good, wise, and powerful; who created us for happiness; and who, having implanted in us immeasurable desires of good, will prolong our existence to all eternity, and will transfer us into an infinite variety of scenes, in order to satisfy those desires, and render our felicity compleat and durable. (DNR 12.24 224)

In the essay “Of Superstition and Enthusiasm,” Hume describes superstition and enthusiasm as two different corruptions of true religion and claims, “*That the corruption of the best things produces the worst, is grown into a maxim*” (E 73). Finally, Hume introduces the *Natural History of Religion* by claiming: “The whole frame of nature bespeaks an intelligent author; and no rational enquirer can, after serious reflection, suspend his belief a moment with regard to the primary principles of genuine Theism and Religion” (NHR Introduction 1 33).

What does Hume think true or genuine religion is? Passages like these pose at least two distinct problems. First, there is the question what Hume thinks true religion is. Of course, one possibility is that “true religion” means different things in different contexts. It seems highly probable that what Cleanthes takes to be true religion in his reply to Philo is quite different from the form of religion that Philo says he venerates. Another possibility is that Hume means something fairly minimal by the phrase “true religion,” such as “whatever form of religion turns out to be true.” If this is right, then it is, perhaps, an open question what true religion is, and Hume does not intend the phrase to have any substantive content. The second problem is the question of whether Hume is sincere in his praise of true religion. This seems clearest in the introduction to the *Natural History of Religion*. It sounds as though Hume here endorses some version of the argument from design for the existence of God, but it may well be that this endorsement is ironic.

One way of understanding the question what “true religion” means is simply what sort of belief about the nature of God is either true, or at least best supported by the evidence. This is how Don Garrett understands the question. Garrett (2012) argues that what Hume means by “true religion” is no more substantive than the content of the very thin form of deism that Philo seems to endorse in the final section of the *Dialogues* (pp. 216–219).

A different way of understanding what true religion is concerns what religious attitudes or practices are appropriate. This seems to be what Hume has in mind in calling superstition and enthusiasm *corruptions* of true religion. They are corruptions because they involve morally pernicious attitudes and practices, not merely false or unsupported beliefs about the nature of God (though they may also involve such beliefs). This way of thinking about true religion is much more general than asking whether there is a God or what God’s attributes are.

Does Hume think that any form of religious practice or religious attitude is appropriate? Philo makes a remark at the end of the *Dialogues* that suggests a negative answer: “*To know God, says Seneca, is to worship him. All other worship is indeed absurd, superstitious, and even impious. It degrades him to the low condition of mankind, who are delighted with entreaty, solicitation, presents, and flattery*” (DNR 12.32 226). Philo’s point here seems to be that any worship beyond a purely intellectual admiration of the cause of order in the universe is impious precisely because it supposes that God is influenced by our praise.

Hume’s use of the phrase “true religion” might also be interpreted in connection with his discussion of what Cleanthes calls the “proper office of religion” in the *Dialogues* (DNR 12.12 220). Cleanthes claims:

The proper office of religion is to regulate the heart of men, humanize their conduct, infuse the spirit of temperance, order, and obedience; and as its operation is silent, and only enforces the motives of morality and justice, it is in danger of being overlooked, and confounded with these other motives. When it distinguishes itself, and acts as a separate principle over men, it has departed from its proper sphere, and has become only a cover to faction and ambition. (DNR 12.12 220)

Thus, the proper role of religion is, in Cleanthes’s view, to serve merely as a reinforcement of moral behavior. True religion, then, might be characterized by its connection to morality: true religion conceives of God as merely pleased by virtue and displeased by vice.

It is a recurring theme in Hume’s writings on religion that every form of religion as it is actually practiced strays from this proper role. Religions invariably characterize God as pleased by more than just virtue and displeased by more than just vice. Philo responds to Cleanthes by claiming “the vulgar ... are utterly incapable of so pure a religion as represents the Deity to be pleased with nothing but virtue in human behavior. The recommendations to the Divinity are generally supposed to be either frivolous observances, or rapturous ecstasies, or a bigoted credulity” (DNR 12.15 221).

This is confirmed by the *Natural History of Religion*, where Hume claims that if

a popular religion were found, in which it was expressly declared, that nothing but morality could gain the divine favour; if an order of priests were instituted to inculcate this opinion, in daily sermons, and with all the arts of persuasion; yet so inveterate are the people’s prejudices, that, for want of some other superstition, they would make the very attendance at these sermons the essentials of religion, rather than place them in virtue and good morals.² (NHR 14 3 81)

Again, we see Hume emphasizing the vast differences between different forms of theism: he emphasizes how far actual religious practice is from what Cleanthes considers the proper office of religion.

Willis (2014) reads Hume as advocating a form of true religion that does not require belief in a God who is specially concerned with human morality or behavior. On Willis’s reading, true religion can be morally salutary even without involving belief in a God who approves of virtue or disapproves of vice. Willis argues that Hume’s genuine

theism – belief in the purposive order of nature – grounds a genuine religious outlook. Willis argues: “patient acceptance of the order and regularity of experience – particularly when experience does not seem ordered and regular – is a kind of peacefulness. We can understand this sort of equanimity, a trait normally associated with religious faith, as an effect of true religion” (2014, p. 56). In short, Willis claims that Hume’s genuine theism leads to a religious outlook that cultivates “a sense of equipoise, stability, and humility” (p. 56). Willis argues that the belief in the purposive order of nature is a form of genuine theism in part because it grounds a religious outlook toward the world, one that makes us more hopeful, balanced, and accepting of the world around us. Thus, Willis reads Hume as endorsing a form of true religion that is both contentful and morally salutary.

Divine Benevolence

The questions about what constitutes theism and what true religion is, in Hume’s view, fit together closely with the question of whether the cause of order in the universe has any moral qualities. While Philo seems to concede at the end of the *Dialogues* that there is some probability that the cause of order in the universe bears some remote analogy to a human mind, he does not concede that the cause of order in the universe is morally praiseworthy. Tom Holden argues that Hume is a moral atheist, in the sense that he denies that the cause of order in the universe has moral attributes. Holden (2010) distinguishes between weaker and stronger forms of moral atheism: according to the weaker form of moral atheism, the cause of order in the universe is not morally praiseworthy; according to the stronger, the cause of order in the universe is not morally assessable at all. Holden argues that Hume is a moral atheist in the stronger sense: the cause of order in the universe, whatever it is, is like a rock or a tornado; just as it makes no sense to claim that a rock or tornado is moral or immoral, it makes no sense to morally assess the cause of order in the universe (pp. 6-8).

Holden claims that Hume’s argument for strong moral atheism depends on his moral sentimentalism, in particular the claim that something can have moral attributes only if it is a natural object of our moral sentiments. Holden claims that Hume denies that the deity or cause of order in the universe is a natural object of our moral sentiments, from which it follows that the cause of order cannot have moral attributes at all (2014, p. 51). The strongest textual evidence for this argument comes from a letter Hume wrote to William Mure, in which he claims that the deity “is not the natural object of any Passion or Affection. He is no Object either of the Senses or Imagination, & very little of the Understanding, without which it is impossible to excite any Affection ...” (quoted in Holden 2014, pp. 52–53).

A different argument for moral atheism is given by Philo in the penultimate section of the *Dialogues*. Philo argues that the existence of natural evil and suffering in the universe can be accounted for by four hypotheses. He argues:

[H]ere may *four* hypotheses be framed concerning the first causes of the universe: *that* they are endowed with perfect goodness; *that* they have perfect malice; *that* they are opposite, and have both goodness and malice; *that* they have neither goodness nor malice.

Mixed phenomena can never prove the two former unmixed principles; and the uniformity and steadiness of general laws seem to oppose the third. The fourth, therefore, seems by far the most probable. (DNR 11.15 212)

Philo argues that the empirical evidence most strongly supports the conclusion that the cause of order in the universe has neither goodness nor malice towards his creation.³

Hume's aim in giving this argument seems to be to emphasize a crucial epistemological difference between the conclusion that the cause of order in the universe probably bears some remote analogy to a mind – the conclusion that Philo surprisingly seems to endorse in the final section of the *Dialogues* – and the conclusion that the cause of order in the universe is morally good or praiseworthy, one that Philo adamantly refuses to endorse. The crucial epistemological difference is this: as weak as the evidential support for the claim that the cause of order in the universe resembles a human mind has been shown to be by Philo's arguments in the *Dialogues*, it is still stronger than the evidential support for the claim that the cause of order in the universe is morally good. This is because the evidence does not support the claim that the cause of order in the universe is morally good at all, but rather most strongly supports the claim that the cause of order in the universe is morally indifferent. In short, Philo's position at the end of the *Dialogues* is that the argument from design provides extremely weak support for an extremely weak conclusion, but there is not even this much evidence to support the view that the cause of order in the universe is morally praiseworthy.

If this is right, we can again best understand Hume's views about divine benevolence in terms of his emphasizing the distance between various forms of religious belief. In contemporary debates, we tend to think that accepting that there is empirical evidence of intelligent design in the world is already well on the way to accepting a robust form of theism. While Hume is rightly remembered for his comprehensive attack on the argument from design, he should also be remembered for driving home the great differences between the "true religion" that Philo venerates and the range of theistic positions that he rejects and disdains.

Miracles

Hume's treatment of miracles is one of his most controversial and influential parts of his philosophy, certainly of his philosophy of religion. Hume argues that belief in a miracle is always irrational. He claims that rationality requires that one proportion one's belief that a miracle has occurred to the strength of the evidence that it has occurred. And he argues that the evidence that a miracle occurred must take into account both the probability of the event's occurring and the probability that the testimony that it has occurred is mistaken. Interestingly, he focuses solely on cases of testimony about miracles; he doesn't consider the case where one seems to witness a miracle oneself. Hume argues that since a miracle is a violation of a law of nature, we have very strong evidence that a miracle has not occurred. In fact, Hume argues that we always have such strong evidence that a miracle has not occurred that it must always be more probable that the testimony is mistaken than that the miraculous event has occurred. If so, then it is always irrational to believe in miracles.

Some commentators take Hume's argument to be essentially over at this point. If this is right, then Hume's argument is an *a priori* one: given that a miracle is a violation of a law of nature and that we always have conclusive evidence that a law of nature has not been violated, then it is impossible to have a preponderance of evidence in favor of a miracle's occurring. Objectors may complain that Hume's argument starts off poorly: if one is willing to concede that a miracle is a violation of a law of nature and that laws of nature are (at least) exceptionless regularities, then it simply seems to follow that miracles do not occur. After all, a regularity wouldn't be a genuine law of nature if there were exceptions to it. It may seem, then, that Hume's argument has nothing really to do with what sort of *evidence* we might have for or against miracles, but merely depends on conceiving of what a miracle is in such a way that it is impossible for miracles to occur. As Alexander George puts it, "this characterization immediately rules miracles out of existence by linguistic fiat" (2016, p. 1).

One way of avoiding this difficulty is to propose that a miracle is not a violation of a law of nature but a violation of something that one *believes* to be a law of nature. Thus, one might suggest, as George does, that Hume has an epistemological conception of a miracle: whether something is a miracle depends in part on what one takes the laws of nature to be (p. 3). If this is right, then evidential considerations do play a role. The question becomes whether the evidence for a miracle could be strong enough to make it rational to believe that something one previously believed to be a law of nature is not. This seems to set up the debate in a fairer way, since people's views about what the laws of nature are can rationally change in response to new evidence.

One advantage of this interpretation of Hume's argument is that it helps us make sense of Hume's appeals to empirical psychology and historical examples in arguing that testimony about the occurrence of miracles does not give us sufficient reason to believe that a miracle has occurred. Thus, George argues persuasively that Hume's appeals to such empirical considerations helps show that belief in miracles is irrational, but neither because Hume defines "miracle" in such a way as to entail that miracles are impossible, nor because he argues *a priori* that it is always more probable that testimony concerning a miracle is false than that the miracle occurred. Thus, on George's interpretation, Hume's claims, for example, about the role that the passions of surprise and wonder play in giving us a tendency to believe testimony about miracles are empirical evidence of a psychological bias that ought to be corrected for in evaluating testimony about an alleged miracle. Similarly, Hume claims: "It forms a strong presumption against all supernatural and miraculous relations, that they are observed chiefly to abound among ignorant and barbarous nations; or if a civilized people has ever given admission to any of them, that people will be found to have received them from ignorant and barbarous ancestors" (EHU 10.2.7 119). Such historical considerations are supposed to give us additional reason to discount the evidential value of testimony concerning miracles.

In whatever way one understands Hume's argument and its force, it is clear that he holds that belief in miracles is irrational. What is less clear is the *significance* of this. One might think that the rejection of rational belief in miracles and the rejection of any form of theism are of a piece. However, this seems to me to be a mistake. Hume claims in the *Natural History of Religion* that many theists deny that God intervenes in any way in the causal order established at the beginning of the universe. He writes: "Many theists, even the most zealous and refined, have denied a *particular* providence, and have

asserted, that the Sovereign mind or first principle of all things, having fixed general laws, by which nature is governed, gives free and uninterrupted course to these laws, and disturbs not, at every turn, the settled order of events by particular volitions" (NHR 6.2 52). In other words, such theists deny that there are miracles that are violations of laws of nature caused by God's will at all. If this is right, then Hume's target in "Of Miracles" is not the rationality of theism in general, but only a specific version of theism. Again, Hume distinguishes between different forms of theism, in this case those that allow that God intervenes in the causal order and those that do not.

At the same time, Hume's argument in "Of Miracles" does have wider implications for religious belief in general. In particular, Hume may be responding to Locke's claims about the role that miracles play in providing evidence for divine revelation. Locke holds that miracles provide a special and perhaps even indispensable form of evidence for divine revelation. He claims that "[t]he holy Men of old, who had Revelations from GOD, had something else besides that internal Light of assurance in their own Minds, to testify to them, that it was from GOD. They ... had outward Signs to convince them of the Author of those Revelations" (*Essay* IV.xix.15 705).⁴ In short, miracles, in Locke's view, serve as the outward signs that help confirm that something is a genuine case of divine revelation. Locke claims that it is witnessing a miracle and testifying to this that helps distinguish cases of rational belief in revelation from the irrational belief of the religious enthusiast. This suggests that Hume's attack on the rationality of belief in miracles has a further implication: it suggests that, if Locke's account of revelation were right, then belief in revelation would always be irrational too. In this way, Hume's attack on miracles can be read as an attack on revealed religion in general.

Conclusion

Hume's views on a variety of religious questions turn out to be subtler and more nuanced than is often thought. In particular, I hope to have shown that a central theme in much of Hume's work on religion is the careful distinguishing of different forms of religious belief and religious practice. It seems highly unlikely that Hume is a theist, at least of any of the more substantive sorts we've considered. But simply concluding that Hume is an atheist and opponent of religion in general risks overlooking the full range of his responses to various forms of religion. Hume is extremely sensitive to epistemic and moral disparities among different forms of religious belief and practice.

It is also worth noting that the arguments against various forms of religious belief and practice that we've considered seem to rely fairly little, if at all, on Hume's general skeptical outlook. Thus, even if Hume thinks that testimony can never provide adequate evidential support for any claim, he thinks that testimony about miracles is beset with particular difficulties. Hume's views on religion are not just straightforward consequences of his general epistemological commitments (though hopefully they are not inconsistent with those commitments!). Some contemporary popular writers seem to assume that Hume's skeptical attitude toward religion is simply a consequence of a more general skeptical outlook. For example, this seems to explain some of Richard Dawkins' attitude toward Hume, whom Dawkins criticizes for failing to 'offer any *alternative* explanation for apparent design, but [leaving] the question open' (1986, p. 6).

Thus, Dawkins claims that it is only after Darwin's publication of the *Origin of Species* that it became "possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist" (1986, p. 6). Dawkins's view seems to be that it would be pretty easy for Hume to be a religious skeptic if he is a skeptic about all manner of things, including the natural world. A similar attitude is found in a writer as strongly opposed to Dawkins as William Dembski, one of the main contemporary defenders of intelligent design. Dembski claims that "Hume was a sceptic and caviller" and that his contribution was merely to find "logical flaws in the design argument" (2002, p. 33). Hume did indeed purport to find logical flaws in the design argument, but his nuanced responses to different forms of religious belief and practice belie the attempt to dismiss him as a pedantic sceptic.⁵

Notes

- 1 Parenthetical citations to Hume's works are as follows: citations to the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (DNR) include the part and paragraph number, followed by page number; citations to Hume's *Natural History of Religion* (NHR) include section and paragraph number, followed by page number; citations to Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (EHU) include section, part, and paragraph numbers, followed by page number; citations to Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* (T) include book, part, chapter, and paragraph numbers, followed by page numbers from the Selby-Bigge and Nidditch edition (SBN); citations to Hume's *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary* (E) include page numbers from the 1987 edition.
- 2 For an interesting discussion of this passage, see Willem Lemmens (2010, pp. 423–460).
- 3 It is significant that Holden claims that this argument does *not* represent Hume's argument for moral atheism. This is because the argument conflicts with what Holden dubs 'liminal natural theology,' which is Hume's view that we lack adequate empirical evidence to support any substantive claims about the intrinsic nature of the deity. Holden takes this argument, then, to be a parody of the kind of substantive or core natural theology that Cleanthes defends and Hume opposes (2010, pp. 168–178).
- 4 Parenthetical citations to Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* include book, chapter, paragraph, and page numbers.
- 5 To read further on this topic, you might consider, in addition to works cited, Russell and Kraal (2017) and Pyle (2006).

References

- Dawkins, R. (1986) *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe without Design*. London: W.W. Norton.
- Dembski, W. (2002) *No Free Lunch: Why Specified Complexity Cannot Be Purchased without Intelligence*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Falkenstein, L. (2009) "Hume on 'genuine', 'true', and 'rational' religion." *Eighteenth-Century Thought* 4: 171–201.
- Garrett, D. (2012) "What's true about Hume's 'true religion'?" *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 10(2): 199–220.
- George, A. (2016) *The Everlasting Check: Hume on Miracles*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Holden, T. (2010) *Spectres of False Divinity: Hume's Moral Atheism* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Hume, D. (1947) *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. N. Kemp Smith. London: Thomas Nelson. Original work published 1779.
- Hume, D. (1975) *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. Selby-Bigge and P. Nidditch, 3rd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hume, D. (1978) *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. Selby-Bigge and P. Nidditch, 2nd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hume, D. (1987) *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. E. Miller, rev. edn. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund.
- Hume, D. (2007) *A Dissertation on the Passions and The Natural History of Religion*, ed. T. Beauchamp. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lemmens, W. (2010) "Beyond the calm sunshine of the mind: Hume on morality and religion." *Tijdschrift Voor Filosofie* 72(3): 423–460.
- Pyle, A. (2006) *Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion: A Reader's Guide*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Russell, P. and Kraal, A. (2017) "Hume on religion." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume-religion/> (accessed 5 September 2018).
- Willis, A. (2014) *Toward a Humean True Religion: Genuine Theism, Moderate Hope, and Practical Morality*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

2

Holbach

MICHAEL LEBUFFE AND EMILIE GOURDON

Paul Henri Thiry d'Holbach was, as a financier of Diderot's *Encyclopedia* and a host to Europe's best minds in the eighteenth century, a prominent figure in the history of ideas. The first half of this chapter describes these roles with a focus on atheism in Enlightenment France. Holbach was also a prolific writer. The second half of this article defends an interpretation of his atheism. We take Holbach to hold that God does not exist and that the knowledge of this fact is a great benefit to those who come to have it.

Holbach as Salonnier, Encyclopedist, and Author

Holbach was born in 1723 in Edesheim in the Palatinate. He was raised by his uncle Franz Adam d'Holbach, who became wealthy at the time of the financial bubble in France linked to Law's system under the Regency of Philippe d'Orléans. He bought a title of nobility with *Privilège* of transmission in the Court of Vienna. He had no children and raised his nephew and niece, Paul Henri Thiry and Suzanne, with a cosmopolitan education. They were both adopted by their uncle. After his uncle's death Paul Henri Thiry, in addition to his fortune, inherited his uncle's title.

Holbach studied in the University of Leiden, one of the most free and cosmopolitan universities in Europe. In 1748 Paul Henri Thiry arrived in Paris and obtained French citizenship in 1749. One year later he married the daughter of his cousin Suzanne, Basile-Geneviève-Suzanne d'Aine. She died prematurely in August 1753. With a papal dispensation he later married his late wife's sister, Charlotte (1734–1814). He had four children from his two marriages.

Suzanne Westerburg, Holbach's cousin, married Jean-Baptiste Nicolas d'Aine, secretary of the Secretary of State for War, Claude le Blanc. From her husband she obtained Le Château de Grandval (today, Sucy-en-Brie), an estate a few miles from Paris,

which became a favorite place of leisure for Holbach. When Jean-Baptiste Nicolas d'Aine died in 1755, Holbach bought his office of Secretary of the King, which provided him French nobility. At 32 years old, then, Holbach was a rich aristocrat of the kingdom of France. Thanks to his wealth and his cosmopolitan education, he was able to become one of the most important salonniers of the Enlightenment in Paris.

Salon and Sociability

Holbach settled in a *hôtel particulier* of the rue Royale Saint Roch in Paris (today, 10 rue des Moulins). For 30 years, his salon gathered ten to twenty guests twice a week, on Thursdays and Sundays. The salon was known for its free speech as well as for its good eating. The ideas and opinions shared in the salon were diverse. Diderot, Naigeon, Grimm, Suard, Raynal, Morellet, Marmontel, Roux, Rouelle, Darcet were among the regular guests, as well as the Englishmen David Hume, Adam Smith, and Laurence Sterne. It was also possible to meet there Antoine de Sartine, police *lieutenant général* in Paris and director of the Library, a position that also made him France's chief censor. Holbach's salon was remarkable for its longevity as well as the regularity and diversity of its guests. The conversation was free without being frivolous; each guest knew he had to respect the decency and good manners related to the salon's sociability to be accepted. The Abbé Galiani, the prominent Italian economist and friend of Holbach, described it as the "Café of Europe" and Holbach as the first *maître d'hôtel* of philosophy. Strangers in Paris, such as European ambassadors, were frequently welcomed. The inner circle was also received in the *domaine de Grandval* where Diderot and Holbach spent weeks together. The most important descriptions of the dinners and stay in Grandval may be found in the correspondence of Diderot with Sophie Volland and, sporadically, in the correspondence of Holbach himself.¹

Holbach's salon was quickly associated with atheistic conspiracies referred to collectively as "Holbach's coterie." There should be no confusion between the open speech in the salon, the radical opinions of some guests, and the elaboration of atheist publications. "Coterie" was initially a pejorative term, spread by Rousseau.² It came thereafter to designate Holbach's inner circle and so contributed to the circle's reputation for materialism and atheism. Rousseau was close to Diderot and Holbach and was a regular guest of the salon until they became estranged. For Rousseau, the coterie represented the origin and spread of a plot against him. However, Rousseau valued Holbach's grace and good manners. In the *Nouvelle Héloïse* Rousseau represented Holbach as Wolmar, the old husband of Julie and virtuous atheist. Even if Rousseau condemned the atheism of Holbach through Wolmar's character, he also respected his irreproachable morality. The rupture between them became permanent when Holbach took the side of David Hume in the argument that the latter had with Rousseau.

Alan Kors argues, correctly, that the coterie was a myth, born with Rousseau and seized by counter-revolutionaries and other reactionaries and developed after the French Revolution (1976a, 1976b). Avezac-Lavigne (1875) was also responsible. Without contesting the French Enlightenment, Avezac-Lavigne produced a teleological portrait of the salon, describing it as a movement toward the inevitable revolution.

“Holbach’s coterie” describes Holbach’s inner circle – perhaps in particular Naigeon and Diderot – more than the salon itself. The term conveys the atheism and radicalism of that group.

Holbach and the *Encyclopédie*

When Holbach arrived in Paris he was best known in the Republic of Letters for his translations of German scientific works. He was fluent in three languages, German, French and English, and had studied sciences in the University of Leiden. Between 1753 and 1760, he published seven translations of works in mineralogy, metallurgy, chemistry, and physics, including translations of the scientists Wallerius, Henckel, and Lehmann. The Germans were more advanced than the French in many of these fields, so Holbach introduced a great deal of new scientific knowledge to France. This work earned him the status of authority in matters of natural sciences. He was elected to the Academy of Sciences of Berlin in 1754, of Mannheim in 1766, and of Saint Petersburg in 1780.

This reputation explains why Diderot turned to Holbach when he needed help with the preparation of the scientific articles of the *Encyclopédie*. Although the first meetings between Holbach and Diderot and Holbach and Rousseau cannot be precisely dated, Diderot and Rousseau were among the first to read his translations and to introduce him in Paris circles.

Holbach did not contribute to the first volume of the *Encyclopédie* (1751). For the second volume, he was commissioned to provide the mineralogy part of the *Encyclopédie* by his friend Diderot after the latter’s financial disagreement with the naturalist Daubenton. Daubenton was asking more money than Diderot was able to pay. Holbach, in contrast, proposed to write all of his articles for free and to contribute financially to the encyclopedic venture. It is hard to know the exact number of articles written by Holbach since they were not all signed by their author. Jerom Vercruysse (1971), who has established the richest bibliography of Holbach, has counted more than 400 articles. In the introduction to the second volume of the *Encyclopédie*, Diderot introduced Holbach as “une Personne dont l’Allemand est la langue maternelle & qui est très versée dans les matières de Minéralogie, de Métallurgie & de Physique ... qui cultive les Sciences sans intérêt, sans ambition, & sans bruit; & qui, content du plaisir d’être utile, n’aspire pas même à la gloire si légitime de le paraître.”³ Far from the figure of the radical atheist, Holbach corresponded here to the ideal of the gentilhomme of the eighteenth century giving his knowledge selflessly for the public good.

In the introduction to the third volume of the *Encyclopédie*, Diderot mentioned the name of the baron: “M. le baron d’Holbach qui s’occupe à faire connaître aux François les meilleurs auteurs allemands qui aient écrit sur la chimie, nous a donné les articles qui portent la marque (-).”⁴ The sign of Holbach in the *Encyclopédie* (“-”), allows us to recognize many of Holbach’s scientific articles; however, Holbach also clearly wrote other articles which were not signed. His knowledge of Germany made him a natural candidate to write several articles about the kingdom of Germany in the Holy Roman Empire: “Diet of the Empire,” “Emperor,” “States of the Empire,” and “The Palatine Elector.” He wrote also two more controversial articles: “Representation” and “Theocracy.”

The article “Representation” is a reflection on the absolute monarchy and political representation. The article, “Theocracy” established a basis for Holbach’s book, *The Sacred Contagion*, published in 1768. We find in this variety of articles in the *Encyclopédie* the basis for understanding the transition in Holbach’s thought from natural scientific materialism to social materialism.

Holbach’s Reputation and the Publication of His Scandalous Works

Holbach seems to have led something of a double life. As a salonnier, he had the reputation of a gentleman, an aristocrat dedicated to the Republic of Letters. As an anonymous, clandestinely published author, by contrast, he published notoriously atheistic and radical works. This uncomfortable status proved particularly complex in Holbach’s relations with French censors. The directors of the Library were men of letters who were patronizing the salons of those they could be in position to censor.

The first of Holbach’s publications were translations released under royal privilege. One, his *Art de la Verrerie*, Holbach signed for Lamoignon de Malesherbes, the director of the Library, who was in charge of censorship in the kingdom. Later, without knowing that they were Holbach’s, Malesherbes censored many of his other works.

The good relationships that Holbach maintained with Malesherbes and then Sartine may have kept him out of trouble despite the clandestine release of more than twenty publications. For example, we know that Malesherbes, who was in charge of royal censorship, informed Diderot about the end of the royal privilege he had been given to publish the *Encyclopédie*. The author then managed to hide his manuscripts in Malesherbes’s home.

Perhaps such friends played a key role in maintaining Holbach’s double life. Holbach truly became known as an atheist author only after his death. As Alain Sandrier (2004) has argued, thanks to his reputation as a scientist and aristocrat, his irreproachable good character, and his influential connections, he was able to avoid many charges and to develop an organized project of atheistic proselytism. Holbach’s efforts at secrecy were so successful that even today the authorship of many of his works remains uncertain. Much of the identification of his works has relied on the testimony of Holbach’s contemporaries after his death. Stylistic comparisons led by the historians Rudolf Besthorn (1969) and Manfred Naumann (1959) and analysis of its corpus coherence carried out by Pierre Naville (1967) in 1943, and Jeroom Vercruysse (1971) have also been important to this task.

Some of Holbach’s publications may have been written with the assistance of Diderot and Naigeon. From the testimony of Naigeon, who was Holbach’s secretary and also Diderot’s literary executor, we know more about the processes that led to the circulation of his work. Never signed, Holbach’s books were consistently published under false names. For instance, *System of Nature* was published under Mirabaud’s name and *Christianity Unveiled* under Boulanger’s name. Each of the work advertises an origin in London; in fact, most of his work was published in Amsterdam by the printer and bookseller Marc-Michel Rey, who rightly holds the reputation of being a key publisher of Enlightenment works. (Rey also worked, for example, with Rousseau, Diderot and Voltaire.) To preserve his anonymity, Holbach used middlemen between himself and Rey.

Naigeon was his trusted collaborator. Naigeon conveyed the manuscripts to his brother, who was a bureaucrat in charge of the distribution of food in Sedan, a town close to the present day border of Belgium and France. This man, in turn, sent the works on to Liège, in present-day francophone Belgium, to a Madame Lonçin, about whom little is known. She delivered the works, finally, to Marc-Michel Rey. Naigeon and his brother were never caught during these clandestine activities, and the enterprise lasted over twenty years.

Although his clandestine and atheistic works provoked scandal and although their publication was illegal, Holbach's reputation was never harmed during his life. This was by no means an ordinary fate. Diderot, for example, who was a close friend of Holbach, was arrested and jailed for the publication of "Letter on the blind" in 1749. As a result Diderot delegated the task of publication to Naigeon after his death.

Publication and Reception of the *System of Nature*

Because of the diversity of his writing activities, Holbach's work looks more like the product of an editorial organization than that of a single author. Indeed, in addition to his own work, Holbach translated and published that of other authors, creating a unified and broadly coherent corpus of atheistic and materialistic works. Notably, he published the posthumous works of Nicolas-Antoine Boulanger. He was also in charge of diverse translations from English to French, with which he had a free hand, frequently making them more atheistic than they were originally. For instance, he translated a collection of short essays and sermons by John Davisson, Samuel Bourne, and Thomas Gordon under the title *De l'Imposture sacerdotale* (1769); the same Gordon's *L'Esprit du clergé* (1767); and Samuel Richardson's *L'Enfer détruit* (1769).⁵

As the work of Robert Darnton has shown (1991, pp. 219–324; 1992b), Holbach's works had a significant impact according to various criteria: the estimated sales number, the number of editions, the number of counter-editions and the numerous reactions they generated. Among them, *The System of Nature* stands out. In addition to numerous editions and counter-editions, several reactions were published shortly after the first edition appeared in 1770. For instance, the *Examen du materialisme ou réfutation du Système de la nature* of Nicolas Sylvestre Bergier was published in 1771 with the ambition to combat the "formal Atheism & the pure Materialism" of the philosophers. Two other refutations are important because of their authors, Voltaire and Frederic II of Prussia. Frederic II defended the political power of the monarch against Holbach's attacks. Voltaire considered *The System of Nature* too radical and worried that it could be the source of more problems to the Republic of Letters by generating an even stronger censorship.⁶ Voltaire also attacked *The System of Nature* in order to show that he was not its author and to distance himself from the work. Indeed, he was often charged with the authorship of censored works and complained in his correspondence of these rumors.

Paradoxically, the refutation by Bergier was criticized by his peers, and the refutation by Voltaire was condemned by Parliament together with its target. Such treatment was excellent publicity for *The System of Nature*. None of them – Bergier, Voltaire, or Frederic II – knew the true identity of the author of *System*. While Voltaire always signed his works, Holbach, as we have seen, preferred to remain anonymous and so to

ensure freedom of speech, and his strategy of dissimulation, clandestine diffusion, and circulation of rumors in the cafés and salons was highly effective. The attacks of famous and prominent authors, however, were nevertheless a great help to Holbach.

Holbach died on 21 January 1789 in Paris, a few months before the French Revolution. Like his friend Diderot, he was buried in the church of Saint Roch. Both the church and their graves were vandalized during the French Revolution and later during the Paris Commune in 1871. Until his death, Holbach's name was never associated with the atheism of his works. Naigeon praised Holbach in the *Journal de Paris*, 9 February 1789, without any mention of his clandestine publishing operations.⁷ In March 1789, Meister revealed in the *Correspondance littéraire* that Holbach was the author of the *System of Nature* (Meister 1881). The publication of the *Correspondance littéraire* was not widely noted, however, and this announcement was not repeated by other newspapers.

Generally, the French Revolution did not appropriate Holbach as a great figure of the Enlightenment. Indeed, perhaps under the influence of Rousseau, atheism did not become a value of the revolution. Robespierre condemned atheism as by nature aristocratic and rejected the "Sect of the Encyclopedists."⁸ Critics such as the Abbé Barruel (1797–1798; 1816–1819) and Michaud's brothers did make Holbach a great representative of atheism. In doing so, however, they tended to emphasize Holbach's secrecy and deception. His works received relatively little attention. The most prominent attention perhaps came from Naigeon, who with Sylvain Maréchal, a pamphleteer and friend of Babeuf, pursued the atheistic struggle in the *Dictionnaire des athées* (2008), published in 1801, in which Holbach appears.

Holbach's Defense of Atheism

We turn now to Holbach's positions. The most well-developed of Holbach's arguments for atheism and related positions, principally criticisms of received religion, may be found in *System of Nature* and *Good Sense in Nature*. In the former Holbach presents his materialistic metaphysics, before criticizing theological views that he understands to conflict with his metaphysics. Targets include influential early modern arguments for God's existence by particular figures – Clarke, Descartes, Malebranche, and Newton – as well as positions: pantheism, theism, optimism, and final causation. Finally, Holbach argues positively for atheism. He defends the compatibility of atheism with morality and the great advantages of atheism to the sage. *Good Sense* is more completely critical. It alternates between criticisms of received religion – which Holbach presents as a tool by which rulers and priests instill fear in the credulous – and criticisms of more sophisticated theological arguments.

It is a theme of both works that atheism is an important part of the wise person's happiness and that, by contrast, the belief in God produces suffering. Happiness typically eludes both ordinary believers, who are deceived by the received religion taught them from their childhood, and also sophisticated philosophers and theologians, who go beyond experience and become entangled in incoherent and groundless debates.

Such a position is compatible with a pragmatic endorsement of atheism, on which one rejects any belief in God primarily on the grounds of the positive effects of such a view.

In his study of atheism in Holbach and Naigeon, Kors (1992, pp. 296f.) endorses such an interpretation of both philosophers:

Historians of atheism too often have missed the profound scepticism that [Holbach and Naigeon] revealed about the status of their own philosophical propositions. When the issues were drawn, they conceded that they could not know the “real” nature of the agencies that underlay phenomena, that from a formally philosophical point of view, materialistic atheism was more a moral choice than a philosophical choice, a will towards the pursuit of happiness.

Holbach emphasizes the importance of the senses to knowledge, so a schematic version of the Pragmatic Atheism that Kors attributes to him might look something like this:

1. Sense experience offers evidence about matter alone. (Empirical Materialism.)
2. God is immaterial. (Divine Immaterialism.)
3. Therefore (by 1 and 2), there is no evidence either that God exists or that God does not exist. (Philosophical Agnosticism.)
4. Happiness has intrinsic value, and we should do whatever best promotes happiness. (Ethical Hedonism.)
5. Atheism promotes happiness. (Happiness in Atheism.)
6. Therefore (by 4 and 5 and regardless of 3), we should be atheists. (Pragmatic Atheism.)

For the Pragmatic Atheist, Happiness in Atheism has no ground in the knowledge of the atheist. No one could know, by Philosophical Agnosticism, whether God exists. The principal problem facing Kors’s interpretation is that such a view leaves the production of happiness, and so also the view that atheism produces happiness, largely unexplained: why should the groundless conviction that God does not exist produce more happiness than the equally groundless conviction that God does exist?

An argument to Intellectual Atheism, which shares some of Pragmatic Atheism’s basic convictions – Empirical Materialism, Divine Immaterialism, and Ethical Hedonism – but attributes a stronger view about the truth revealed by experience together with a positive, plausible thesis about the relation between knowledge and happiness might be more convincing in this respect. It explains why Holbach might believe that atheism promotes happiness:

1. Experience offers evidence about matter alone. (Empirical Materialism.)
2. God is immaterial. (Divine Immaterialism.)
3. Therefore (by 1 and 2) God does not exist. (Philosophical Atheism.)
4. Happiness has intrinsic value, and we should do whatever best promotes happiness. (Ethical Hedonism.)
5. Knowledge promotes happiness. (Intellectual Hedonism.)
6. Therefore (by 3, 4, and 5), we should be atheists from knowledge. (Intellectual Atheism.)

The second argument offers a more satisfying account of the association of atheism with happiness: absent any further explanation, it is more plausible to think that knowledge tends to promote happiness than that beliefs lacking any justification do.

The argument to Intellectual Atheism also presents a challenge, however. The inference from the first two lines to Philosophical Atheism is not clearly valid, in contrast to the pragmatist's inference to Philosophical Agnosticism. More needs to be said to explain how one can rule out the existence of a thing about which one has no knowledge.

Moreover, this new argument attributes a different position to Holbach. Intellectual Atheism describes a narrower range of views than Pragmatic Atheism. It permits the possibility that atheism from ignorance might not promote happiness and so does not offer a reason for atheism from ignorance. The position that the knowledge that God does not exist promotes happiness but that the bare true belief might not, while perhaps more plausible than Pragmatic Atheism, needs explanation.

We think that Kors is correct to focus on the question of the relation of atheism and happiness in Holbach, but we also think that Kors's answer is mistaken. Holbach understands the happiness of atheists to arise from, and reliably only from, a reasoned rejection of God. In this defense of our view, we will start with a discussion of the premises that are not at issue between Pragmatic and Intellectual Atheism. Then, we will argue that Holbach is a Philosophical and Intellectual Atheist rather than a Philosophical Agnostic and a Pragmatic Atheist and offer accounts of Holbach's positions on the issues that these positions raise. The primary basis for taking Holbach to be an Intellectual rather than a Pragmatic Atheist is his insistence on the claims that only matter exists and that only matter can be known. These convictions ground his Philosophical Atheism and his most distinctive and original arguments against traditional theological views.

Shared Premises

Because several premises are not at issue in the two interpretations, we may present them quickly. They will serve as useful background to later arguments. Holbach's Empirical Materialism is evident throughout his works. Here is the opening of Chapter 1 of *System of Nature* (1770/1970, I, 10):

Men will always deceive themselves by abandoning experience to follow imaginary systems. Man is the work of Nature: he exists in Nature; he is submitted to her laws; he cannot deliver himself from them; nor can he step beyond them even in thought. It is in vain his mind would spring forward beyond the visible world, an imperious necessity always compels his return.⁹

Empirical materialism is evident already in Holbach's reference here to the visible world: to go beyond nature is to go beyond what is visible. His characterization of nature later in the same chapter, however, makes his commitment to the doctrine still more clear: "Nature, therefore, in its most extended signification, is the great whole that results from the assemblage of matter under its various combinations, with that diversity of motions which the universe offers to our view" (*System* I, 15). This passage identifies nature with matter and motion. Together with the previous passage, it suggests that matter and motion is the only thing that we can know – or even contemplate in thought – and that we know it, at least in the first instance by means of the senses.

Holbach's account of nature suggests that Divine Immaterialism in these arguments is a subtle doctrine, an answer to the question of what the God would be like whose existence is in question and who on either interpretation is utterly unknown to us and ultimately rejected. Holbach does entertain several doctrines on which God is, or might be, considered to be material. So it is not clear that he himself always considers notions of God on which God is immaterial. His treatment of conceptions of God on which God is material, however, is revealing. For example, in concluding a criticism of Cartesian accounts of God, Holbach writes: "according to these notions, we have the right to tax him with announcing in a very clear manner, that there is no other God than nature; this is a pure *Spinosism*. In fact, we know that it is from the principles of Descartes that Spinoza drew up his system, which flows from them necessarily" (*System* 2, 44). It is the reduction of God to nature that Holbach takes to be Spinozistic. He similarly charges Malebranche with Spinozism, and then asks: "Is not this formally saying that nature is God?" Holbach, however, considers Spinoza a "celebrated atheist" (*System* 2, 30). Philosophers who identify God and nature are, for Holbach and however they regard themselves, atheists. This shows that Holbach makes atheism the rejection of an immaterial God. An immaterial God, then, is the kind of entity that, on Holbach's view, the theist asserts and the atheist denies, and it is the kind of entity that Holbach himself denies.

Ethical Hedonism, finally, as Kors (1992) correctly emphasizes, is a clear view in Holbach. A canonical account may be found at the end of Chapter 9 of *System* II. There Holbach writes that the "final end of man is self-preservation, and rendering his existence happy." He goes on to describe human duties in terms of this end: "Men's duties to one another arise from the necessity of employing those means which tend to the end proposed by nature. It is by promoting the happiness of other men, that we engage them to promote our own." Holbach takes a broadly psychologically egoistic and hedonic doctrine to ground the duty to promote happiness.

Philosophical Atheism, not Agnosticism

We may now turn to contested interpretative issues. Kors's conviction that Holbach really endorses Philosophical Agnosticism has some textual basis, primarily in Holbach's modesty about our ability to know the causes of what we perceive. Holbach does strongly emphasize both our limited knowledge of nature and our inability to know the causes of many of the effects on our senses. This basis is not enough for agnosticism, however. In order for Holbach to think that an immaterial God may for all we know be the cause, perhaps the distal cause, of some of those effects, we must also think that such a God is possible. He does not. Holbach regards only material things as possible, and it is this conviction that he takes to warrant the inference from Empirical Materialism and Divine Immaterialism to Philosophical Atheism.

Holbach does emphasize our limited knowledge of nature. His empiricism suggests that we often have knowledge of effects but not their causes. A clear representative expression of this view may be found near the beginning of *System of Nature*:

The universe, that vast assemblage of everything that exists, presents only matter and motion: the whole offers to our contemplation nothing but an immense, an uninterrupted

succession of causes and effects; some of these causes are known to us, because they strike immediately on our senses; others are unknown to us, because they act upon us by effects, frequently very remote from their original cause. (*System I*, 15)

For this intellectual modesty to support agnosticism, however, Holbach must think it possible that among the causes unknown to us might be an immaterial God. Here, there is some ambiguity in the text and a defender of Kors's position can find some supporting evidence. A notable passage occurs in Holbach's response to arguments for God's existence in Clarke and his allies in Chapter 2 of *System II*:

If God is to the human species what colors are to the man born blind, this God has no existence with relation to us; if it is said that he unites the qualities which are assigned to him, this God is impossible. If we are blind, let us not reason either upon God or upon his colors; let us not ascribe to him attributes; let us not occupy ourselves, with him. (*System II*, 39)

In this passage, Holbach calls God impossible, which might seem to amount to a version of Philosophical Atheism. A supporter of Kors's interpretation might point out, however, first that Holbach writes that God has no existence "with relation to us." This is a phrase of a sort that Holbach uses repeatedly in his *System*.¹⁰ It may seem to invite the conclusion that, on Holbach's view, God may or may not exist but that we could never know it and that it could never be important to us. Second, Holbach here adds the conclusion that God is impossible only on the condition that the God in question unites qualities that are assigned to him. Such qualities in this context include human qualities that are then supposed to be infinite. Stripped of the incoherent and unnecessary supposition, it might seem that Holbach's view here is that we would have no way of knowing about whether God exists. Many, even most, of Holbach's other criticisms of received religious and theological views on which he finds God or the idea of God to be impossible similarly focus on such qualities.

Despite these points, we think that the balance of evidence favors the attribution to Holbach of Philosophical Atheism. This conclusion rests principally on two points. First, Holbach does contend that conceiving of an immaterial thing at all is impossible for us, regardless of what further qualities we do or do not attribute to such a thing, and that what we cannot possibly conceive is itself impossible. Second, the principal basis for agnosticism in Holbach that Kors cites – the fact that the causes of natural effects are hidden from us – is no basis in Holbach for agnosticism about an immaterial God. Holbach is confident that nature – that is, matter and motion – is sufficient for all of its effects. Even if some of particular causes are unknown to us, Holbach does take us to know that those causes are material.

For Holbach it is impossible to conceive of an immaterial God and therefore impossible that there could be an immaterial God. Holbach's response to Berkeley is illuminating. Berkeley takes God to be the cause of our sense perceptions and so to play a role rather similar to that which, on Kors's interpretation of Holbach as an agnostic, an immaterial God might play for Holbach. In response to Berkeley, Holbach writes: "Each idea is an effect, but however difficult it may be to recur to the cause, can we possibly suppose it is not ascribable to a cause? If we can only form ideas of material substances, how can we

suppose the cause of our ideas can possibly be immaterial?" (*System I*, 830.) The position that Holbach invokes here – that we can only form ideas of material substances and therefore are unable to suppose the possibility of an immaterial cause – is a position that he maintains consistently and, in particular, with reference to the idea of an immaterial God. The evidence we have already cited in support of Holbach's Empirical Materialism already suggests this view: we cannot step beyond nature even in thought. The rest of the opening paragraph of Chapter 1 is still more clear:

The beings which he pictures to himself as above nature, or distinguished from her, are always chimeras formed after that which he has already seen, but of which it is impossible he should ever form any correct idea, either as to the place they occupy, or of their manner of acting. There is not, there can be nothing out of that Nature which includes all beings.¹¹

Even if Holbach takes many of the causes of effects to be hidden, he nevertheless takes human ideas to be limited to ideas of nature. On Holbach's view, we cannot even conceive of a being outside of nature – that is, an immaterial being – and (perhaps, therefore) such a being is not possible.

Although there are passages, such as those we have quoted above, where Holbach emphasizes the impossibility of a God in possession of certain qualities in addition to immateriality, immateriality alone is sufficient for impossibility on his account. Here is evidence from the same discussion, the response to Clarke, that Holbach takes the inconceivability of God to be a mark of the impossibility of God: "A thing is demonstrated to be impossible, not only as soon as we are incapable of having true ideas of it, but also whenever the ideas we can form of it contradict themselves, destroy themselves, and are repugnant to one another. We can have no true ideas of a spirit ..." (*System 2*, 39). If we can have no true ideas of any spirit, agnosticism is not warranted because any spirit is impossible.

Noting these arguments, we should improve the argument to Philosophical Atheism by placing Empirical Materialism in the background and adding two further premises on which what is immaterial is inconceivable and that what is inconceivable is impossible:

1. Experience offers evidence about matter alone. (Empirical Materialism.)
2. God is immaterial. (Divine Immaterialism.)
3. What is immaterial cannot be conceived.
4. What is inconceivable is impossible.
5. Therefore (by 2, 3 and 4), God does not exist. (Philosophical Atheism.)

Empirical Materialism, which is not directly relevant here, re-enters the argument in the course of a response to a potential objection from Kors. Kors takes agnosticism to arise from Holbach's modesty about our knowledge of causes. On this interpretation, it is Holbach's view that we know very little about nature, and that is why, for all we know, an immaterial God might be the cause of some of what we experience. Although Holbach is modest about our knowledge of natural causes, he is confident that all causes are natural. These points are clearest in *Good Sense* (39–41), quoted only partially here:

Nature, whose essence is visibly to act and produce, requires not, to discharge her functions, an invisible mover, much more unknown than herself. Matter moves by its own energy, by a necessary consequence of its heterogeneity.... Acknowledge then, that matter acts of itself, and cease to reason of your spiritual mover, who has nothing that is requisite to put it in action. Return from your useless excursions; enter again into a real world; keep to second causes, and leave to divines their first cause, of which nature has no need, to produce all the effects you observe in the world.¹²

Holbach's empiricism does not bring him to admit that some remote cause might be immaterial. Nature itself, he argues is sufficient for all of its effects. This point undermines the last justification that one might have for taking Holbach to be an agnostic. There are for him mysteries in nature, but the mysteries concern particular causes, not the ability of nature to explain everything that we experience.

Intellectual Hedonism and Intellectual Atheism

Holbach clearly takes knowledge to contribute importantly to our happiness: "Knowledge, Reason, and Liberty, can alone reform and make men happier" (*Good Sense*, Preface). Such a view would seem, in combination with Philosophical Atheism, to lead directly and unproblematically to Intellectual Atheism, and we think that it does. That is, Holbach takes it to be true that God does not exist, and he takes people who know that truth to be made happier by it just because it is substantive and valuable knowledge.

On the interpretation of Holbach as an agnostic, there are also some grounds to accommodate his claims that knowledge, and so also atheism, brings happiness. Those grounds are primarily negative: many theists, like Clarke, attribute clearly false qualities to God, and the rejection of such patently false entities – even if one oneself holds an unwarranted atheistic view – might be thought to put one in a better epistemological position than many believers. On such an interpretation, Holbach's contention is that the atheist believes something that may be false but that, at least, is better warranted than many religious beliefs.

We think that the balance of textual evidence supports Intellectual Atheism. There is no question that, as he might under either reading, Holbach takes both vulgar and sophisticated religious belief to be harmful. *System* and *Good Sense* are full of such criticisms. There is also, however, some textual evidence showing that Holbach takes it to be the kind of atheism that proceeds from the knowledge that God does not exist that brings happiness. Important texts may be found near the end of *System II*. "An atheist, if he has reasoned justly, if he has consulted nature, has principles more certain, and always more humane, than the superstitious" (*System II*, 145).

When we shall be disposed usefully to occupy ourselves with the happiness of men, it is with the Gods in heaven that the reform must commence; it is by abstracting these imaginary beings, destined to affright people who are ignorant and in a state of infancy, that we shall be able to promise ourselves to conduct man to a state of maturity. (*System II*, 150)

The first of these texts takes well-founded atheism to arise from principles that are more humane but also more certain than superstition. A purely pragmatic atheism would be poorly placed to make this claim, for, apart from the question of whether they are humane, principles just as certain could give rise to theism. The second text suggests that it is by dispelling imaginary beliefs that we attain happiness. Pragmatic atheism might indeed be the dispelling of one imaginary belief, but, because in it we assume that Holbach is a Philosophical Agnostic, it replaces that belief with another belief that is also imaginary. Intellectualism in Holbach therefore supports Intellectual Atheism, which is the replacing of a false belief with a true belief.

Finally, the end of *System II* emphasizes the power of truth in an individual's life and in society.

The principles of atheism, or the *System of Nature*, are not even calculated, as we have shown, for a great number of persons, extremely enlightened on other points, but frequently too much prepossessed in favor of received prejudices....A secret and invincible inclination frequently reconducts, in despite of all reasoning, the most solid and the best-fortified minds to those prejudices which they see generally established, and of which they have themselves drank copiously from their most tender infancy. Nevertheless, by degrees, those principles which then appear strange or revolting, when they have truth on their side, insinuate themselves into the mind, become familiar extend themselves far and wide, and produce the most advantageous effects over every society. ... No work can be dangerous; above all, if it contains *truth*. (*System II*, 151–152)

Were Holbach to think it true that we cannot know whether God exists, this emphasis on the power of truth would lead him, we think, powerfully to advocate the open expression of agnosticism. Of course, he does not. Holbach openly and powerfully expresses atheism. His emphasis on the power of truth suggests, then, that he does so because he thinks that atheism is true and that its open and frank expression has good effects for the individual and society because, and to the extent that, it is knowledge.

Notes

- 1 See Sauter and Loos (1986).
- 2 Rousseau uses the term several times in *The Confessions*, Part II, books 9 and 10. The scholarly edition of Rousseau's works is Gangebin and Raymond (1959).
- 3 The Baron d'Holbach, a person whose native language is German and who is very learned in matters of mineralogy, metallurgy, and physics ... who cultivates the sciences without interest, without ambition, and without noise; and who, content with the pleasure of being useful, does not aspire even to the glory of notoriety.
- 4 The Baron d'Holbach, who works to make excellent German scholars of chemistry known to the French, has given us those articles that bear the mark "-".
- 5 See Davisson, Bourne, and Gordon (1767), Trenchard and Gordon (2009), and Richardson (1720; 1769).
- 6 In a letter to d'Alembert of 29 July 1775, Voltaire worried in particular about *Good Sense*: "Il y a plus que du bon sens dans ce livre; il est terrible. S'il sort de la boutique du *Système de la nature*, l'auteur s'est bien perfectionné. Je ne sais si de tels ouvrages conviennent dans le

moment présent, et s'ils ne donneront pas lieu à nos ennemis de dire : Voilà les fruits du nouveau ministère." (There is more than good sense in this book. It is terrible. Although it is cut from the same cloth as the *System of Nature*, the author has perfected himself here. I do not know whether such works are suitable at the moment, or whether they will not give our enemies the chance to say: "Look at the fruits of the new ministry.") See Voltaire (1997, p. 1205; letter 829).

- 7 For a reproduction of this article, see Holbach (1979).
- 8 See, for example, Robespierre (1867, pp. 308–336) Robespierre says of the sect of the encyclopedists: "Elle renfermait quelques hommes estimables, et un plus grand nombre de charlatans ambitieux" (p. 324). (It included a few respectable men and many more ambitious charlatans.)
- 9 The translation used throughout this essay is by H. D. Robinson. It has many editions, of which we use the 1970 one, cited *System*. The widely used French edition of this work is Holbach (2008a).
- 10 See *System I*, 10, quoted above. See also *System I*, 17: "Those which cannot act on any of our organs, either immediately and by themselves, or mediately, by the intervention of other bodies, exist not for us"; I, note 9: "That which has no relation with our senses ... has no existence for us"; II, 28: "But when a being does not act upon any part of our organic structure, it does not exist for us"; and II, 81: "A God clothed with the attributes of theology, has a model nowhere, and does not exist relatively to us."
- 11 Other notable passages on this theme include *System I*, 95: "He will never understand either himself or others in speaking of a spiritual soul, or of an immaterial God distinguished from nature"; *System II*, 22: "That subtle reasoner, called a theologian ... does not perceive that he himself is prostrate before a being of his own imagination, of which it is impossible he should form to himself any correct idea, unless, like the savage, he re-enters into visible nature, to clothe him with qualities capable of being brought within the range of his comprehension"; and *Good Sense*, 22: "Nothing is more evident, than that the idea they endeavor to give us, of the action of mind upon matter, represents no object. It is an idea without model." Translation from *Good Sense* here are from the widely available but unattributed translation of the Freethinker's Library Series, d'Holbach (1772/1900). The widely used French edition of this work is d'Holbach (2008b).
- 12 Another clear passage is Note 125 in *System I*: "Of whatever nature the Cause of causes may be, it is evident to the slightest reflection that it has been sedulous to conceal itself from our view; that it has rendered it impossible for us to have the least acquaintance with it, except through the medium of nature, which is unquestionably competent to everything."

References

- Avezac-Lavigne, C. (1875) *Diderot et la société du baron d'Holbach*. Paris: Leroux.
- De Barruel, A. (1797–1798) *Mémoires pour Servir à l'Histoire du Jacobinisme*, 4 vols. London.
- De Barruel, A. (1816–1819) *Biographie Universelle Ancienne et Moderne: Histoire par Ordre Alphabétique de la vie Publique et Privée de tous les Hommes qui se sont faits Remarquer par leurs Actions ou leurs Écrits*. Paris: Michaud.
- Besthorn, R. (1969) *Textkritische Studien zum Werk Holbachs*. Berlin: Rütten & Loening.
- Darnton, R. (1991) *Edition et Sédition: L'Univers de la Littérature Clandestine au XVIIIe Siècle*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Darnton, R. (1992) "Une Spéculation sur l'Irréligion: Le Système de la Nature du Baron de d'Holbach," in Darnton (1992a) *Gens de Lettres: Gens du Livre*. Paris: Odile Jacob, pp. 220–244.

- Davisson, J., Bourne, S., and Gordon, T. (1767) *De l'Imposture sacerdotale*, trans. P. d'Holbach. London: Amsterdam: M. M. Rey.
- Holbach, P. (1970) *The System of Nature*, trans. H. Robinson. New York: Burt Franklin. Original work published 1770.
- Holbach, P. (1900) *Good Sense in Nature*, trans. anon. London: W. Stewart & Co. Original work published 1772.
- Holbach (2008a) *Le Système de la Nature ou Des lois du Monde Physique et du Monde Moral* Paris: Coda. Original work published 1770.
- Holbach, P. (2008b) *Le bon sens puisé dans la Nature* Paris: Coda. Original work published 1772.
- Gangebin, B., and Raymond, M. (eds.) (1959) *Oeuvres Complètes*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Kors, C. (1976a) *D'Holbach's coterie: An Enlightenment in Paris*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Kors, C. (1976b) "The myth of the Coterie Holbachique." *French Historical Studies* 9: 573–595.
- Kors, C. (1992) "The atheism of d'Holbach and Naigeon," in M. Hunter and D. Wooton (eds.) *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Maréchal, S. (2008) *Dictionnaire des Athées anciens et modernes*. Paris: Chez l'Éditeur. Original work published 1801.
- Meister, J. (1881) "Mars 1789," in *Correspondance littéraire*. Paris: Editions M. Tourneux, XV, pp. 415–423.
- Naumann, A. (1959) *Ausgewählte Texte*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag
- Naville, P. (1967) *Paul Thiry d'Holbach et la philosophie scientifique au XVIIIe siècle*. Paris: Gallimard. Original work published 1843.
- Richardson, S. (1720) *Of the Torments of Hell: The Foundation and Pillars Thereof Discovered, Searched, Shaken, Removed*, 2nd edn. London: W. Boreham.
- Richardson, S. (1769) *L'Enfer Détruit*, trans. ted by P. d'Holbach, Amsterdam: M. M. Rey. Original work published 1720.
- Robespierre, M. (1867) *Œuvres complètes*, Texte établi par recueillies et annotées part A. Vermorel: F. Cournol.
- Sandrier, A. (2004) *Le style philosophique du baron d'Holbach: conditions et contraintes du prosélytisme athée en France dans la seconde moitié du XVIIIe siècle*. Paris: H. Champion.
- Sauter, H. and Loos, E. (eds.) (1986) *Paul Thiry baron d'Holbach. Die gesammelte Korrespondenz*. Wiesbaden/Stuttgart: Frank Steiner.
- Trenchard, J., and Gordon, T. (1721) *The Independent Whig*. London: J. Peele.
- Trenchard, J., and Gordon, T. (2009) *L'Esprit du clergé*, trans. P. d'Holbach. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger. Original work published 1721 (trans. 1767).
- Veracruz, J. (1971) *Bibliographie descriptive des écrits du baron d'Holbach*. Paris: Lettres Modernes, Minard.
- Voltaire (1997) *Correspondance choisie*. Paris: La Pochotèque.

3

Marx

VANESSA WILLS

As unstintingly irreligious as he was, Karl Marx was not an atheist.¹ He was a staunch opponent of belief in things supernatural or divine, yet neither might Marx have considered himself an agnostic, since agnosticism is typically understood as the position one occupies when taking oneself to have no answer to the question of whether or not God exists. Marx, as we will see over the course of this chapter, argued that it was incoherent and pointless even to pose that very question. His irreligion is best understood not primarily as an ontological stance on the existence or non-existence of God, but rather as part and parcel of a philosophical worldview radically committed to sweeping such questions aside, to ontologically and epistemologically centering the human perspective, to overthrowing “all relations in which man is a debased, enslaved, forsaken, despicable being,” and to taking as its core principle that “man is the highest being for man”.² In an 1842 letter to Arnold Ruge, he explains:

I desired that, if there is to be talk about philosophy, there should be less trifling with the label “atheism” (which reminds one of children, assuring everyone who is ready to listen to them that they are not afraid of the bogey man), and that instead the content of philosophy should be brought to the people.³

Marx also did not take the scope of religious thinking to be restricted to deities or to the plainly divine or supernatural. Rather, a “religious worldview” for Marx includes any perspective that subordinates the value of human beings to some other entity, especially one that operates – even if only apparently – external to human beings and impervious to their influence.

Marx’s critique of religion is intimately bound with his analysis of alienation more broadly, and indeed it is fair to say that Marx regarded religion as a purest form of alienated consciousness. One use of the term ‘alienation’ is rooted primarily in the legal

transfer of title or property, and in this very basic sense, it is the process of an object passing out of the possession of one individual, and into another's. What was formerly "self" – even if only through the extended "self" of property – becomes "other." For Marx, however, alienation always has, in addition to this economically grounded meaning, a more sinister connotation. What was formerly part of oneself becomes not just any external other, but also a hostile, dominating, even monstrous other. One confronts oneself (or what once was oneself) in a form so threatening and strange one hardly knows it for what it is. It appears only as an inscrutably alien master at whose pleasure one lives, satisfies one's needs, and dies. The pervasiveness of alienation and its influence on human thought is what leads Marx to conclude that "... if in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process."⁴

Bourgeois society's worship of capital, which is alienated human activity, counts as "religious" on Marx's view. Indeed, the universal subservience to capital, a fickle master that seemingly permeates and conditions every social relation, constitutes in large part precisely those conditions of existence that encourage religious belief to come so naturally to many. Marx writes that capitalist commodity exchange is:

... a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands.⁵

Marx describes wage labor under capitalism as an alienating activity. The worker pours time, energy, imagination, and skill into creating products. These products along with the labor that is congealed in them, though created by the worker, are the possession of the capitalist who employs her. The worker's labor is thus added to the capitalist's store of wealth, enriching and empowering them, even as it degrades and debilitates the laborer. Her own active powers confront her as so much opulence, so many armed guards, so much political influence bought and paid for, and so many natural resources privately held on the other side of the table, all arrayed against her.

Marx frequently drew a tight analogy between capitalist alienation and religious alienation, even going so far as to suggest that they were but varieties of the same phenomenon. In the 1884 "Estranged Labour" manuscript, Marx writes:

The more the worker spends himself, the more powerful becomes the alien world of objects which he creates over and against himself, the poorer he himself – his inner world – becomes, the less belongs to him as his own. *It is the same in religion.* The more man puts into God, the less he retains in himself. The worker puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer belongs to him but to the object.⁶

For Marx, the problem of religious alienation is not only, or even primarily, that one believes what one has no good reason to believe. People make errors all the time

about what does or does not exist. That fact makes them sometimes mistaken, but not necessarily alienated. Religious alienation is rooted in the fact that in religious practice, human beings take all that is best in themselves, invest an alien being with it, and then kneel before their own alienated powers which have taken on the form of an external and independent force that dominates them, all the while unaware that this is what they have done.

Marx, of course, was not the first to make this point. Ludwig Feuerbach argued as much three years earlier, in *The Essence of Christianity* (1881).⁷ For Feuerbach the solution to the problem of religious alienation could be found in pursuing a new religion – a religion of “Man” – and he exulted that “What yesterday was still religion is no longer such today; and what today is atheism, tomorrow will be religion” (Feuerbach 1881, p. 32). Yet Marx argued (perhaps prodded a bit by the impact of Max Stirner’s *The Ego and Its Own*) that this would not resolve the problem of religious alienation.⁸ Real, concrete, individual human beings would subordinate themselves to an ideal, abstract, general concept of humanity. The principle of “man as the highest being for man” would still be but a phrase in these circumstances. It could only be fully realized as a practice once human beings related to their own active powers not as abstract concepts to be venerated, but as their own engaged capacities to transform their natural and social worlds, and themselves.

In this chapter on Marx and atheism, I begin by explaining the relationship between Marx’s historical materialism and his position on the existence of God. It may seem at first obvious how irreligion would follow from a philosophical materialist stance. I show that Marx’s historical materialist irreligion, however, warrants a closer and more nuanced assessment than we might at first realize. I go on to discuss why Marx’s historical materialism leads him to regard questions about the existence of God as fundamentally misguided. I then unpack the meanings of Marx’s infamous statement that religion is “the opium of the people.” I conclude with a discussion of Marx’s pronouncement that “the criticism of religion ends with the teaching that man is the highest being for man,” a teaching that separates mere atheism from radical irreligion.

Atheism and Historical Materialism

Central to Marx’s worldview is what he and his collaborator Friedrich Engels called “the materialist conception of history.”⁹ Marx and Engels developed this conception within the context of a longstanding philosophical debate concerning the relationship between ideas and matter (and between mind and world), a debate that was particularly hotly contested within the German Idealist milieu that formed the backdrop for their work. Just three of the countless questions that arise from this relationship between ideas and matter are most relevant for our purposes here. They are closely related to one another, and they are: Which, ideas or matter, is the most fundamental aspect of existence, if one is? How ought we to characterize the complex interaction between ideas and matter? And how is it possible – if it is possible – for our (internal, mental, abstract) ideas to accurately and reliably reflect the (external, physical, concrete) world?

Life Determines Consciousness

Marx argued that matter, in the form of what was concrete, physical, and sensible, constituted the most fundamentally determining aspect of existence. While ideas could in turn influence material conditions, the existence of ideas depended on material conditions in a way that material conditions did not in turn depend on ideas. Ideas can and often do affect matter; yet, what ideas arise, how prominent they become, and what influence they have, are all determined within parameters set by the material conditions in which they are produced. Material conditions obtain, however, often thoroughly independently of what anyone thinks about them. This is what Marx meant when he wrote, famously:

Morality, religion, metaphysics, and all the rest of ideology as well as the forms of consciousness corresponding to these, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their actual world, also their thinking and the products of their thinking. It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness.¹⁰

We will focus for now on just two implications of this philosophically rich passage. Firstly, mere changes in thought do not and cannot suffice to bring about changes in the material conditions of life. Adopting an atheistic worldview, to give one example, does not by itself constitute an act of freedom or liberation, because unfreedom and slavery are caused not by the idea of God, but by the real domination, exploitation, inequality, and alienation that exist as actual political and economic relations giving rise to religious belief in the first place. ““Liberation,”” Marx writes, “is a historical and not a mental act, and it is brought about by historical conditions.”¹¹

Secondly, insofar as ideas can be changed, this cannot happen as a purely psychological process but rather requires direct practical engagement with the material world. *Merely* disavowing belief in God is, Marx thinks, not only perhaps pointless (because it is not quite the liberationist act one might suppose it to be), but perhaps also rather pathetically ironic, since, as we will soon discuss in greater detail, one may deny this God or that and yet retain the underlying “religiousness” endemic to an alienated human existence.

Matter and Historicity

Marx, like his predecessor G. W. Hegel who was so hugely influential upon him, conceived of Being as restless, conflictual, and evolving. While Hegel attributed this movement primarily to the emergence and contradiction of increasingly rational ideas, Marx saw it as an essential characteristic of matter, with changes in thought brought about primarily by changes in material conditions. The notion that the dynamism in matter did not require an external and supernatural “prime mover unmoved,” but instead could be explained by the dynamic nature of matter itself, is one that occurs in

the earlier French atheist and materialist thought that influenced Marx. Representatively of this tradition, Baron d'Holbach writes in his *System of Nature* (1834, p.37):

It is clear, then, that the continual motion inherent in matter, changes and destroys all beings; every instant depriving them of some of their properties, to substitute others: it is motion, which, in thus changing their actual essence, changes also their order, their direction, their tendency, and the laws which regulate their mode of acting and being. ... We see an uninterrupted progression, a perpetual chain of motion and combination; from which is produced, beings that only differ from each other by the variety of their elementary matter—by the numerous combinations of these elements, from whence springs modes of action and existence, diversified to infinity.

Marx believed that material and ideal conditions changed through an unceasing process of development, coming into and passing out of Being, in what Hegel had termed a process of “becoming.”¹² Whenever we ask of anything in existence, how it came to be, the answer is to be given first and foremost as a history of material alteration.

As I stated earlier, Marx's materialism is not only an ontological position but also an epistemological one, since it speaks directly to the question, How is it possible for our ideas to reflect the world? Let us first motivate the puzzle. The problem, articulated perhaps most famously and perspicuously by René Descartes, is that ideas and matter seem to be two totally distinct types of “substance.”¹³ We have a sense of how material objects interact with one another, a story given to us by natural science. To give a necessarily quick and admittedly very highly simplified story, they interact by setting into motion, through their physical properties such as mass, weight, and so on, a chain of physical reactions that then directly affects other physical objects. But the story we tell about physical causal interactions is one precisely into which ideas (which lack physical properties of any kind) cannot enter. It will thus be rather challenging, at the very least, to explain how it could be that our ideas have any relationship to the material world at all, much less one that would allow us to confidently rely upon our ideas as information about the external physical world.

As Marx sees it, one of the chief innovations of his materialist conception of history over earlier forms of materialism is that it provides a path forward out of this dilemma. Earlier materialisms, Marx argues, failed to resolve the epistemological worry because they presupposed human beings in “contemplation” of the external world, rather than human beings in active interaction with it. He writes: “The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. Man must prove the truth, i.e., the reality and power, the this-worldliness of his thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is a purely scholastic question.”¹⁴

We do not have the space here to thoroughly evaluate whether Marx was right to believe that he had found a solution to the puzzle over whether our ideas reflect the world, although it is a matter worthy of special attention. Our concern here is to consider how this position fits with Marx's views about religion. If objective truth can be attained only through practical interaction with the material world, then it would seem

that the existence of a spiritual being, at a time prior to the existence of the concrete natural world, is not even a candidate for the sort of thing we could in principle have objective knowledge about. Marx's conclusion, that questions about the existence of God can hardly be posed, much less sensibly answered, is the focus of the following section.

The Insensibility of Asking after God's Existence

For the purposes of situating Marx's philosophy with respect to other major philosophical traditions vis-à-vis the existence or non-existence of God, it can be a useful shorthand to think of and refer to Marx as an atheist philosopher. However, this was not Marx's own conception of his philosophical commitments, and indeed he went to some lengths to distinguish his philosophical system from other properly atheistic ones (most especially, from the atheism of philosophers such as Ludwig Feuerbach or Bruno Bauer). When Marx speaks of atheism, what he has in mind first and foremost is the specific ontological and metaphysical claim that God does not exist. For Marx, the atheistic denial of the existence of God is itself incoherent, a symptom of insufficiently historicized and materialized worldviews. This incoherence of the atheistic denial of God's existence is rooted in the incoherence of the question that atheism seeks to answer.¹⁵ That question is "Does God exist?" Or, to draw out its unaskability more precisely: "Does there exist something prior and external to everything in concrete existence that brought all that is, into existence?" Marx insists that we cannot assume an absence of concrete being and then ask ourselves what exists in or proceeds from that absence. We must take the existence of the sensible world as a given, and restrict our investigations to what is the case when sensuous, material existence is assumed. Marx's attempt to show this takes the form of a response to an interlocutor who asks, "Who begot the first man, and nature as a whole? He replies:

I can only answer you: Your question is itself a product of abstraction. Ask yourself how you arrived at that question. Ask yourself whether your question is not posed from a standpoint to which I cannot reply, because it is wrongly put. Ask yourself whether that progress as such exists for a reasonable mind. When you ask about the creation of nature and man, you are abstracting, in so doing, from man and nature. You postulate them as non-existent, and yet you want me to prove them to you as existing. Now I say to you: Give up your abstraction and you will also give up your question. Or if you want to hold on to your abstraction, then be consistent, and if you think of man and nature as nonexistent, then think of yourself as non-existent, for you too are surely nature and man.¹⁶

This response, as Marx is first to admit, is somewhat flippant. And so he imagines his interlocutor pressing on to insist that they do not wish to "postulate man and nature as non-existent" but rather simply to inquire as to their origins. To that, we get a different response from Marx: "since for the socialist man the entire so-called history of the world is nothing but the creation of man through human labor, nothing but the emergence of nature for man, so he has the visible, irrefutable proof of his birth through himself, of his genesis."¹⁷

What can this mean? We may note, first of all, that it is of a piece with Marx's radical humanist perspective. Human beings exist as their own product, brought into being

through their own activity in the natural world. The species *Homo sapiens* is distinct from any individual member of the species in that whereas any individual owes its existence to something external to it, the species brings itself into being, producing and reproducing its own conditions of existence. For Marx, not even the natural world has an existence independent of human beings, for it is so thoroughly conditioned by human action. As we saw earlier, for Marx it is this actuality of practical engagement with the natural world that makes it objectively knowable for human beings. Relevant here are Marx's comments in response to Feuerbach, whom Marx believes improperly accepts a rigid separation between man and nature:

So much is this activity [of industry and commerce], this unceasing sensuous labour and creation, this production, the foundation of the whole sensuous world as it now exists that, were it interrupted only for a year, Feuerbach would not only find an enormous change in the natural world, but would very soon find that the whole world of men and his own perceptive faculty, nay his own existence, were missing.¹⁸

It is impossible for human beings to productively inquire into a world without humans, as that world does not exist for them and cannot be engaged with, but only passively contemplated (if that).

Marx diagnoses the tendency to seek supernatural explanations for the emergence of human beings as a behavior related in part to the quite reasonable habit of seeking causes generally. Individual human beings, after all, obviously do not simply spring into existence out of nowhere, but are born. "The Creation," Marx writes in his 1844 "Private Property and Communism," is "therefore an idea very difficult to dislodge from popular consciousness. The fact that nature and man exist on their own account is incomprehensible to it, because it contradicts everything tangible in practical life."¹⁹

This is also Marx's explanation of the basis for the idea that there must be some external cause for the emergence and existence of nature. Marx diagnoses it as a mistaken generalization from what must be true in the case of an individual being, namely that it does not come into being of its own accord but is rather brought into existence by some other externally existing individual being(s) whose existence is independent of the individual whose emergence is being explained. The reality of such dependence, especially of this asymmetrical type, is so pervasive, Marx suggests, that humans then assume that what is true at the level of the individual being must be true for all of nature as such: that there must be some external being that brings it into existence. The quest after supernatural explanations, he concludes, is in part the result of faulty generalization from what is true of natural causes.

"The Opium of the People"

Famously, Marx considered religion to be "the opium of the people."²⁰ That metaphor suggests a model of religion as a stupefying narcotic, deadening human senses to the slings and arrows of worldly existence. Unsurprisingly, however, this single phrase by no means exhausts Marx's views on the subject, and is even misleading when isolated from its context. In this section, I address the distinctions between Marx's critique of

religion and those of his socialist contemporaries, offer a detailed discussion of the famous “opium of the people” passage, and show how Marx’s claims here are of a piece with his systematic views about materialism and alienation, broadly.

Whereas other socialist atheists such as Bruno Bauer regarded religion as a primary cause of human misery and alienation, for Marx religion was best understood as a symptom of underlying social ailment, an indirect indication of the suffering from which its devotees seek some respite. For that reason, religious belief cannot be written off as mere error, and it would be mistaken to deride the content of religious doctrine as *mere* falsehood or illusion.²¹ Rather, the specific appearance of religious belief reveals something of the character of the world of which it is a part. It facilitates the realization that, as Marx writes in this same passage, “this state, this society, produce religion, an inverted world-consciousness, because they are an inverted world.”²²

Some interpreters of Marx read the opium metaphor as a wholly negative indictment of religion. For example, Nicholas Churchich writes in *Marxism and Alienation* (1990, p. 145) that Marx “obviously suggests that religion is a mark of alienation, weakness, abasement, and helplessness,” without acknowledging that Marx’s picture suggests a far more nuanced account of religion than this. For Marx, the opium metaphor goes deeper than simply stating that religion harms, or that it is a form of escapism. The opium metaphor is designed to represent how, like widespread narcotic abuse, the widespread embrace of religion is itself a sign of how bad things are, that ours is a world that produces and reproduces the need for escape. At the same time, its palliative effects cannot be written off or ignored as though they were merely illusory, when the relief it brings is real and attractive.

Consider modern-day discussions of the growing epidemic of heroin addiction in the United States. It is widely supposed that the rising prevalence of opiate use is related to the crushing psychological and physical effects of deepening poverty that many have little to no hope of escaping in their lifetimes.²³ It might well be true that heroin addiction only makes that condition all the more dire over time; and yet it would show a lack of sympathy and imagination not to see that heroin might also make the awful present a bit more bearable, and that this is no small thing.

And so, although the likening of religion to opium is perhaps one of his most oft-cited statements, its full meaning only starts to come clear once one observes that this metaphor is preceded by a subtle point about the void religion fills for many. “Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and also the protest against real distress,” Marx writes. “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people.”²⁴

As stridently as Marx comes down against religion at times, and against Christianity in particular, he also recognizes that religious longing is itself a protest against inhumanity, a demand for conditions better suited to human needs than are the conditions one finds oneself in at present. To that end, just after declaring religion “the opium of the people,” Marx writes:

To abolish religion as the illusory happiness of the people is to demand their real happiness. The demand to give up illusions about the existing state of affairs is the demand to give up a state of affairs which needs illusions. The criticism of religion is therefore in embryo the criticism of the vale of tears, the halo of which is religion.²⁵

Marx's critique of religion is part and parcel of broader politically revolutionary aims. It is not enough simply to attempt to disabuse people of religious belief and yet leave undisturbed the wretched conditions that give rise to the yearning for spiritual refuge.

It may be objected that religious belief and practice do more than assuage the suffering borne by individuals in an unjust society. Religion provides a sense of community and belonging. It provides ethical guidance, answers to questions about the nature of human existence and the world of which humans are a part, and inspires expressions of charity, devotion, and creative endeavor that no doubt have had significant positive impacts reaching beyond what the opium metaphor could capture. Religious convictions have inspired social justice movements from Palestine to Mississippi. While it is mistaken to read Marx as simplistic or altogether negative in his appraisal of religion, it is worth noting that whereas the opium metaphor seems to characterize religion as stultifying and deadening, religion can and has sometimes played a remarkably agitational and enlivening part in human history. Once we acknowledge this, the question then is whether Marx has an argument against religion that resists the objections to which the opium metaphor is vulnerable.

Paul N. Siegel, in his *The Meek and the Militant* (2005), offers a defense against the notion that Marx's use of the opium metaphor rules out appreciation of religion's sometimes politically energizing effects. Siegel writes: "Opium dreams can rouse to protest and struggle, can stimulate as well as stupefy. Opium, however, is never conducive to realistic perception" (p. 44). And struggle against inhumane circumstances can never be as effective without realistic perception of those circumstances and their causes, as it can be when armed with clear understanding.

Yet another closely related objection could be made to Marx's likening of opium to religion, namely that religious belief imbues the world with charm and meaning that would make life dull and pointless without it. Here we turn to one of Marx's less famous metaphors. Marx tells us that the point of critiquing religion is precisely that we may "pluck the living flower" of human emancipation. Marx writes:

The basis of irreligious criticism is: Man makes religion, religion does not make man. ... [Religion] is the fantastic realisation of the human essence because the human essence has no true reality. ... Criticism has torn up the imaginary flowers from the chain not so that man shall wear the unadorned, bleak chain but so that he will shake off the chain and pluck the living flower. The criticism of religion disillusions man to make him think and act and shape his reality like a man who has been disillusioned and has come to reason, so that he will revolve round himself and therefore round his true sun. Religion is only the illusory sun which revolves round man as long as he does not revolve round himself.²⁶

Here Marx's point is that religion – and more broadly, a religious attitude that marks not only explicitly religious and supernatural belief but also much capitalist ideology – not only permits adherents to reconcile themselves to a reality that ought to be overturned, but also obscures the nature of that reality. It offers answers to questions about human existence and the social world, but they are, Marx thinks, exactly the wrong ones. Most significantly, religious (perhaps especially Judeo-Christian) doctrine teaches that the most important being is not the human species, but rather a god or gods that exist/s independently of human activity, and that ultimately has the decisive

hand in shaping human existence. Breaking with this religious perspective, Marx insists, allows human beings to come to an understanding of human existence as itself a fundamentally human product. The problem with religion according to Marx is not only that it covers over a grim reality with charming distractions, but also that in so doing it prevents us from realizing our power to fundamentally alter that reality so that it, too, shines.

Marx and *the Jewish Question*

In *On the Jewish Question*, written in 1843 and therefore during the same period he was crafting his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* in which the famous opium metaphor appears, Marx responds at length to Bruno Bauer's contention that Prussian Jews had no civil or human right to practice their religion freely because it conflicted with the state religion of Christianity. Bauer's rationale for this view was that rather than advocating for the free exercise of Judaism within a Christian state, Jews ought to participate in the struggle for a secular state, and furthermore to reject all religious practice in favor of atheism.

Marx's response offers not only a critique of religion, but a critique of liberal secularism and atheism as well. The response also highlights Marx's expansive understanding of religion and religiosity to include many forms of human subjection to an inhuman and alien power. And it addresses the religiosity that Marx takes to be inherent in the secular liberal democratic state.

As I have stated at the outset, although he was deeply irreligious, Marx did not call himself an atheist. We have discussed the epistemological and metaphysical convictions that led Marx to be critical of the atheist stance. In *On the Jewish Question*, we find Marx's specifically political critique of liberal atheism and secularism. The crux of this critique is that one can renounce Judaism, Christianity, or any other creed, worship no god, and yet be quite "religious" all the same, elevating an ideal projection above concrete human beings, failing to recognize that human beings and their world are themselves a social product, and altogether rejecting the principle of "man as the highest being for man." The self-professed atheist who does this need not flatter himself that the Jew, the Christian, or the Muslim, is "religious," while he is not. Bourgeois secularism, Marx argues, "neither abolished the *real* religiousness of man, nor strives to do so." He continues:

Where the political state has attained its true development, man – *not only in thought, in consciousness, but in reality, in life* – leads a twofold life, a heavenly and an earthly life: life in the political community, in which he considers himself a communal being, and life in civil society, in which he acts as a private individual, regards other men as a means, degrades himself into a means, and becomes the plaything of alien powers. The relation of the political state to civil society is just as spiritual as the relations of heaven to earth.²⁷

Existence in the "truly developed" political state (of which Marx takes U.S. secular liberal democracy to be a prime example) projects humanity's communal nature into an imaginary realm of civic virtue. In the famous "opium of the people" passage, Marx says of religion that "it is the fantastic realization of the human essence because the

human essence has no true reality.”²⁸ Bourgeois democratic political life shares this trait. In and through the state, people are represented as equals, deciding the issues that matter through open debate in a free marketplace of ideas, every voice mattering via the ballot box, all united together in a shared project of seeking and bringing about what’s best for the community as a whole. This “heavenly life” of political community is a far cry from the “earthly life” of competition, domination, egoism, and exploitation. It is for this reason that Marx writes: “The members of the political state are religious owing to the dualism between individual life and species-life, between the life of civil society and political life. They are religious because men treat the political life of the state, an area beyond their real individuality, as if it were their true life.”²⁹

Marx’s contention is that in much the same way that in religion, a spiritual realm is treated as the “true” reality with the material world being a kind of dim shadow, in bourgeois political life, individuals treat the idealized abstraction of the citizen as though it were the real existent entity of which the actual human being is but a dim reflection.

The “citizen” is a free and independent individual, but only by virtue of the state.³⁰ Those traits that are essentially human are understood to belong to human beings only insofar as they occupy a status as citizens of the state. Meanwhile, in actual point of fact, human beings in the free state are not free, are not equal, and do not exercise real agency. Ludwig Feuerbach’s critique of Christianity maintains that human beings project a perfected and idealized version of humanity and worship it as God, then regard that projection as the cause of their own existence. Marx’s point here is that atheist worldviews are not immune to this same religious process. In a similarly “religious” mode, one may regard the state as perfect realization of human virtues and powers, even while those virtues and powers continue to elude the actual human beings who constitute the state. And so, Marx writes:

Man, even if he proclaims himself an atheist through the medium of the state – that is, if he proclaims the state to be atheist – still remains in the grip of religion, precisely because he acknowledges himself only by a roundabout route, only through an *intermediary*. Religion is precisely the recognition of man in a roundabout way, through an intermediary. The state is the intermediary between man and man’s freedom. Just as Christ is the intermediary to whom man transfers the burden of all his divinity, all his *religious constraint*, so the state is the intermediary to whom man transfers all his non-divinity and all his *human unconstraint*.³¹

Marx’s opposition to religion, then, extends much further than mere disbelief in the supernatural. It is an opposition to any worldview that rests content with leaving the real isolation and powerlessness of human beings intact, satisfied with a fantastic representation of sociality, community, and agency in an abstract political realm.³²

Conclusion: “Man is the Highest Being for Man”

In his 1884 *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, Marx writes: “The criticism of religion ends with the teaching that man is the highest being for man, hence with the categorical imperative to overthrow all relations in which man is a debased,

enslaved, forsaken, despicable being.”³³ But what does it mean for human beings to treat themselves as the highest beings for themselves? One thing it means is that, as William Shakespeare might have put it, man is the measure of all things. That the value of any practice, theory, or social arrangement depends crucially on how well it promotes or hinders human beings in realizing their essence as beings that, consciously and purposively, produce and reproduce their own existence and conditions of existence.

Furthermore, and to that same end, a world in which “man is the highest being for man” is a world in which human beings recognize no value higher than their own human essence, worshipping nothing – not God, but also not money, not tradition, and not the political state. It means regarding these as products of human creative activity, and not fetishizing them as phenomena with an independent existence that humans must sacrifice themselves to serve. Since institutions, values, laws, capital, and so on are all human creations, the valuation of these over real human existence is susceptible to the same brand of critique that Marx applies to religious belief. To value capital gains over human wellbeing is to take up a *religious attitude* toward economic profit. To value legal order, over the welfare of human beings living within that order, is to take up a *religious attitude* toward the law.

Lastly, to teach that “man is the highest being for man” is also to call for the abolition of the domination of man over man. When Marx writes of “man,” he is not promoting an abstract humanism. He is not calling for liberating the idea of man, but rather the self-emancipation of the real individual concrete human beings whose subservience, powerlessness, and alienation provide the material basis for a worldview in which these are regarded as ineradicable and essential aspects of human social existence.³⁴

For Marx, atheism on its own does not go far enough. It makes a negative existential claim that there is no God. But to be irreligious, it is necessary to go further than this, to insist that not only is there no God, but there is no value whatsoever more important than that of human existence in its fullness, which encompasses the values of human welfare, human development, human agency, and human creative potential.

Hence when it comes to religion, for Marx the defining question is not whether or not God exists. It is, rather, whether or not one irreligiously affirms the flourishing of human individuals in community with one another as the highest value for human beings, and engages in radical political practice aimed at the furtherance and concrete realization of this principle.

Notes

- 1 This is so, in spite of the received wisdom that “Marx, of course, was an atheist” (Lobkowitz 1964, p. 319), that Marx was a “thoroughgoing atheist” who “did not doubt that religious belief claims are false” (Turner 1991, p. 323), or that Marx’s so-called “atheism is an essential premise of his whole theory” (Schuller 1975, p. 331). However, Marx’s position as irreligious though not properly atheist has received some previous attention, with commentators noting that his “rejection of religion (especially of Christianity) cannot be interpreted as atheism” (Parinetto 1983, p. 5), that “even atheism has to be surpassed because it posits humanity only through a denial of God” (Geoghegan 2004, p. 585), that for Marx, “religion and atheism are both meaningless positions” (Cloeren 1987, p. 123), and that “atheism did not, in the last

analysis, form part of the communist programme” (McLellan 1987, p. 18). Moroziuk (1974, p. 191) splits the difference, arguing that for Marx, “atheism was necessary for the reappropriation of human consciousness,” while also noting that “once man attains complete and total human reality, atheism ceases to be meaningful.” And then there are those who deny that Marx was irreligious at all, charging for example that “in Marxism ... the religious element is unmistakable” (Popper 2011, p. 402), or that “Marx did nevertheless create a religion or a substitute religion, marked by all the essential features of a faith” (Stromberg 1979, p. 210).

- 2 Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, MECW 3:182. (Throughout this text, I cite the multi-volume *Collected Works* of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1979–2005) by indicating the specific work cited, as well as the volume and page numbers.)
- 3 Marx, “1842 letter to Arnold Ruge,” MECW 1:395.
- 4 Marx and Engels, *Critique of the German Ideology*, MECW 5:36.
- 5 Marx and Engels, *Capital*, MECW 35:83.
- 6 Marx, “Estranged Labour,” MECW 3:272.
- 7 Feuerbach observed (1881, p. 33): “Religion is the disuniting of man from himself; he sets God before him as the antithesis of himself. God is not what man is – man is not what God is. God is the infinite, man the finite being; God is perfect, man imperfect; God eternal, man temporal; God almighty, man weak; God holy, man sinful. God and man are extremes: God is the absolutely positive, the sum of all realities; man the absolutely negative, comprehending all negations. But in religion man contemplates his own latent nature.”
- 8 Stirner criticized Feuerbach’s “religion of Man” as alienation in a different garb, writing that: “The supreme being is indeed the essence of man, but, just because it is his *essence* and not he himself, it remains quite immaterial whether we see it outside him and view it as ‘God’ or find it in him and call it ‘essence of man’ or ‘man.’ I am neither God nor *man*, neither the supreme essence nor my essence, and therefore it is all one in the main whether I think of the essence as in me or outside me.” (Stirner 1995, p. 34) Stirner’s solution was to reject the problem of alienation altogether as a non-issue, while Marx instead concluded that alienation could not be resolved by recourse to worship of the abstraction “Man,” but only by directly altering human beings’ material conditions of existence. In contrast to Feuerbach, Ernst Bloch writes, Marx “was not content to see man’s treasures squandered on heaven simply in order to bring them back from alienation to some abstract species man” (Bloch 2009, p. 252).
- 9 Marx and Engels, *Critique of the German Ideology*, MECW 5:31.
- 10 Marx and Engels, *Critique of the German Ideology*, MECW 5:36–37.
- 11 Marx and Engels, *Critique of the German Ideology*, MECW 5:38.
- 12 One of Hegel’s most profound dialectical insights appears in his *Science of Logic* (Hegel 2010, pp. 136–144). He notes that pure abstract being lacks any determinate quality and that therefore the content of “pure being” is “nothing.” This unity of “being” and “nothing,” and conceptual movement between them, Hegel terms, “becoming.” Hegel writes: “Becoming is the first concrete thought and thus the first concept, whereas being and nothing are empty abstractions” (Hegel 2010, p. 143).
- 13 Descartes writes: “Those things which we conceive clearly and distinctly as being diverse substances, as we regard mind and body to be, are really substances essentially distinct one from the other.” It is on this basis that Descartes asserts the immortality of the soul, since, “the extinction of the mind does not follow from the corruption of the body” (Descartes 1996, p. 9).
- 14 Marx and Engels, *Critique of the German Ideology*, MECW 5:3.

- 15 Cloeren (1987) has argued that in this respect, Marx's approach bears striking similarities to the methods of early analytical philosophy in the style of G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell, noting that "Marx in true analytic manner does not reject a position as a false or incorrect answer to a legitimate question but ... condemns the very question as meaningless, as one to which one cannot reply because it is one that is distorted, absurd (*verkehrt*)."
- 16 Marx, "Private Property and Communism," MECW 3:305.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Marx and Engels, *Critique of the German Ideology*, MECW 5:40.
- 19 Marx, "Private Property and Communism," MECW 3:304.
- 20 Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, MECW 3:175.
- 21 Lobkowicz notes (1964, p. 156): "whereas Feuerbach and the Left Hegelians viewed religion simply as a wrong ideology, that is, as a competing *Weltanschauung* which misinterprets the nature of man, Marx considered it as the reflection of a wrong world."
- 22 Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, MECW 3:175.
- 23 In a study on increased mortality among white non-Hispanic American citizens at midlife, economists Anne Case and Angus Deaton (2017) reported that their research suggested "deaths of despair come from a long-standing process of cumulative disadvantage for those with less than a college degree. The story is rooted in the labor market, but involves many aspects of life, including health in childhood, marriage, child rearing, and religion. Although we do not see the supply of opioids as the fundamental factor, the prescription of opioids for chronic pain added fuel to the flames, making the epidemic much worse than it otherwise would have been" (p. 3).
- 24 Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, MECW 3:176.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, MECW 3:175–176.
- 27 Marx, *On the Jewish Question*, MECW 3:154. Emphasis mine.
- 28 Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, MECW 3:175.
- 29 Marx, *On the Jewish Question*, MECW 3:159.
- 30 Toscano (2010) makes the related point that for Marx, "though it might transcend religious content by separating itself from any confessional determination, the state maintains religious form by embodying the alienated freedom of man in something external to him" (p. 230).
- 31 Marx, *On the Jewish Question*, MECW 3:152.
- 32 Geoghegan (2004, p. 19) notes that for Marx, "religion represents how far *political* emancipation falls below *human* emancipation."
- 33 Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, MECW 3:182.
- 34 Relevant here is the observation in Mészáros (1972, p. 8) that "'Alienation' is an eminently historical concept. If man is alienated, he must be alienated *from* something, as a result of certain *causes* – the interplay of events and circumstances in relation to man as the subject of this alienation – which manifest themselves in a *historical* framework. Similarly, the 'transcendence of alienation' is an inherently historical concept which envisages the successful accomplishment of a process leading to a qualitatively different state of affairs." Delos McKown (1975, p. 48) argues – incorrectly, I think – that "practical activity, the division of labor, socio-economic contradictions, and alienation did not necessitate religion, as Marx understood it, but merely served as sufficient conditions in which religion could develop its spectral nature". I think to conclude thus is to restrict the scope of the "religious" too narrowly, far more narrowly than Marx himself did. If consciousness can only be "conscious existence," then, absent revolutionary practice and historical materialist theory (both of which can only emerge historically), consciousness of existence in an "inverted world" will always be religious in just the way Marx explicitly maintained atheist worldviews could be, and in fact were.

References

- Bloch, E. (2009) *Atheism in Christianity*. New York: Verso.
- Churchich, N. (1990) *Marxism and Alienation*. Cranbury: Associated University Press.
- Cloeren, H. (1987) "Marx on Religion." *International Studies in Philosophy* 19: 1–20.
- Descartes, R. (1996) *Meditations on First Philosophy*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Original work published 1641.
- Feuerbach, L. (1881) *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. M. Evans. London: Trübner & Co.
- Geoghegan, V. (2004) "Religion and Communism: Feuerbach, Marx and Bloch." *The European Legacy* 9: 585–595.
- Hegel, G. (2010) *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Holbach (1834) *The System of Nature*. London: J. Watson. Original work published 1770.
- Lobkowicz, N. (1964) "Karl Marx's attitude towards religion," *Review of Politics* 26: 319–352.
- Marx, K., and Engels, F. (1975–2005) *Collected Works*. New York: International Publishers.
- McKown, D. (1975) *The Classical Marxist Critiques of Religion: Marx, Engels, Lenin, Kautsky*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- McLellan, D. (1987) *Marxism and Religion: A Description and Assessment of the Marxist Critique of Christianity*. London: Macmillan Press.
- Mészáros, I. (1972) *Marx's Theory of Alienation*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Moroziuk, R. (1974) "The role of atheism in Marxian philosophy." *Studies in Soviet Thought* 14: 191–212.
- Popper, K. (2011) *The Open Society and its Enemies*. New York: Routledge.
- Schuller, P. (1975) "Karl Marx's atheism." *Science and Society* 39: 331–345.
- Siegel, P. (2005) *The Meek and the Militant: Religion and Power across the World*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.
- Stirner, M. (1995) *The Ego and its Own*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Stromberg, R. (1979) "Marxism and Religion." *Studies in Soviet Thought* 19: 209–217.
- Toscano, A. (2010) "Beyond Abstraction: Marx and the Critique of the Critique of Religion." *Historical Materialism: Research in Critical Marxist Theory* 18: 3–29.
- Turner, D. (1991) "Religion: Illusions and Liberation," in T. Carver (ed.) *Companion to Marx*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 320–338.

Wollstonecraft

SANDRINE BERGÈS

*I am not become an Atheist, I assure you, by residing in Paris.*¹

Mary Wollstonecraft wrote these words in a letter to Joseph Johnson, her publisher, on 15 February 1793, after she had resided in Paris for two months. She had traveled to Paris with a commission to write a series of letters on the French Revolution. However, upon arriving, she was quickly discouraged by the turn the revolution seemed to have taken, wondering whether the principles of 1789 survived at all, or whether the aristocracy of noblesse had been replaced with one of wealth.

Wollstonecraft had come to Paris at the beginning to the Reign of Terror. A few months before her arrival, mobs had butchered aristocrats in their prisons, priests and nuns in convents and monasteries, supposedly on the order of Danton. The first few weeks of her stay had themselves been momentous: the king of France had been tried by the people, condemned to death and executed. She had seen the king drive past her window on his way to his trial, just a couple of weeks after she had settled in Paris. But even without the growing atmosphere of terror Wollstonecraft would have found it hard to settle in Paris: her French, while good enough for reviewing and translation purposes, was not really up to making conversation, and she was in Paris alone despite having originally planned to travel with friends. Perhaps it is not surprising that her first impressions should be negative, bordering on the depressive. It would not have been surprising either if she had begun to lose her faith.

There are several ways of reading this sentence from her letter to Johnson. The first is to take it at face value – Wollstonecraft did not lose her religion while in Paris, she remained as she was before traveling to France, and that, if we believe her earlier writings on the subject of religion, and her biographers, was a Church of England Christian with sympathies for the Rational Dissenters – a sect of Christians with a scientific bend, who counted Hobbes and Newton amongst their influences – who was not afraid to question biblical interpretations.

A Companion to Atheism and Philosophy, First Edition. Edited by Graham Oppy.
© 2019 John Wiley & Sons Ltd. Published 2019 by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

The second reading is that she did not lose her religion in Paris because she had already lost it. She had lost it at some point between writing her *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787) in which she appears to argue for a firm and traditional religious education for young women, and her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (published 1791), in which religious attitudes are often equated with oppression. In that later work, Wollstonecraft reads Rousseau's claim that the purpose of women is to please men as derived from the story of the Genesis in which woman was created for man (1993, p. 151). Later in the same chapter she criticizes Madame Genlis's extreme views on parental authority as harmful and absurd, and grounded in a mixture of religion and superstition (p. 179). If she did indeed praise a traditional religious education in her earlier work (and we will see whether she did below), in the *Vindication* Wollstonecraft, it seems, is no longer happy to accept the philosophical consensus on the place of religion in young women's education.

Before we go any further, let me correct what is perhaps a misapprehension: despite her name being occasionally cited by atheists, at no point in her career did Mary Wollstonecraft admit to atheism. In fact, religious beliefs nearly always underpinned her arguments, especially, perhaps, the most radical ones. It is clear that she was not an atheist. Yet, for various reasons, she is often read as one. In this essay, I will explore some of the reasons why Wollstonecraft has been branded with the mark of atheism. I will appeal to reasons both contextual (who, indeed, does not become an atheist in Paris!) and intellectual (drawing in particular on the reluctance of second-wave feminists to admit religion in their midst). I will show how her position as an English Christian who was friendly with the Rational Dissenters made atheism less attractive to her than it was to her French counterparts, and how her approach to religion in fact strengthened her feminist arguments.

Writing Religion out of her Life: Godwin, Atheism and Biography

In this section I will discuss Godwin's (1798) biography of Wollstonecraft and give an overview of her early and late discussions of religion such as are sometimes quoted in support of the view that she became an atheist at some point in her life. I will suggest that these interpretations are not warranted, and that, indeed, the interpretations of her early writings as conventionally religious are also to be questioned. In later sections I will attempt to situate Wollstonecraft's religious thought in the political atheism of her times, and with the tradition of feminist atheism.

Despite having been a successful and popular writer during her too brief lifetime, Wollstonecraft's reputation was really made – or broken – after her death. Her husband, William Godwin, started work on his *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* a week after his wife's funeral, and it was published in 1798, a few months after her death. Godwin had decided, in keeping with his beliefs, and against Johnson's advice, to be perfectly honest about everything. He described her love affairs; her almost erotic friendship with Fanny Blood; her unrequited passion for her married colleague Henri Fuseli; her illegitimate affair with Imlay as well as the fact that her first child, Fanny, was born out of wedlock; her two suicide attempts;² and the fact that she was Godwin's lover for several months before she became his wife.

Some people knew some of this already, of course; it would not have been possible for Wollstonecraft to marry Godwin had she already been married to Imlay. But after the publication of the *Memoir*, all this became public knowledge, and Wollstonecraft was branded an outcast, her book removed from respectable libraries.³

Godwin was then both an anarchist and an atheist, and of course the man who had gotten Wollstonecraft pregnant out of wedlock (at least the second time around). Yet it was she, not he, who suffered most from his revelations, and, by association, his own beliefs. It was suspected that Wollstonecraft's affairs, her readiness to take her life when she felt she could not go on, and her association with Godwin, all indicated atheism on her part. One reason for this, perhaps, was the generally accepted belief that a wife ought to adopt her husband's religion (or even lack thereof) – a principle sanctified by Rousseau himself (1799, p. 377).

Godwin did not, as a matter of fact, accuse his wife of being an atheist, but he did describe her religious beliefs as unorthodox, highly personal, and perhaps not even quite religious. "Her religion was, in reality, little allied to any system of forms; and, as she has often told me, was founded rather in taste, than in the niceties of polemical discussion" (1798, p. 34).

In the passage it almost seems as if Godwin is saying of his wife that she did not enjoy philosophical argument – and indeed, on some interpretation of Godwin's biography of his wife, he did not think that being argumentative was the key to her true character.⁴ Perhaps a more charitable interpretation of Godwin is not that he thought his wife was not fond of logic, but that she avoided it when it came to theological disputes. While even this is questionable – there are arguments about how to interpret the scriptures in the *Rights of Woman* – it would go some way towards explaining why Wollstonecraft was happy to carry on as a Church of England Protestant while living among rational dissenters, and then to marry an atheist while she herself was not. If she regarded religion as mostly private and not a subject open to constant philosophical debate, she would have found it much easier to live in this manner.

Godwin goes on to describe the private nature of her religious thought: "In fact she had received few lessons of religion in her youth and her religion was almost entirely of her own creating. But she was not on that account the less attached to it (1798, p. 34–35). Her religion, he suggests, was little more than an emotional reaction to the beauty of the natural world, a way of relating to nature, of communing with it, but not a set of beliefs involving a god dictating a code of behavior. This would perhaps seem a condescending or derogatory way of describing his wife's faith were it not for the fact that it resembles very closely the sort of religious education and attitude Rousseau recommends for his young ward in his educational treatise, *Emile*. Rousseau suggests that *Emile* should receive no formal religious education, but be left to discover God by himself through his ramblings in the countryside. Later, when he is an adult in a position to judge the merits of the religions on offer, *Emile* should choose for himself which to adopt. Wollstonecraft, according to Godwin, has remained at the earlier stage, where faith is only private and doesn't need to be sanctioned by an official religion.

Were he not to say any more, it would seem that Godwin sees his wife's faith as immature and uneducated, as the faith of a child who has been educated as Rousseau dictates, but then has not been able to make the final step of choosing an official

religion for herself. However, Godwin tells us that the private nature of Wollstonecraft's faith is evolved from an earlier stage where she did seek validation from official dogma. The first time they met, he tells us, at a dinner hosted by Johnson, their publisher, where Thomas Paine was the third guest – a guest that Godwin was a lot more interested in listening to than the bad-tempered, and bad-mannered woman who worked as a reviewer and translator for Johnson – Godwin and Wollstonecraft ended up arguing about religion: “We touched upon some questions on the subject of religion, in which her opinions approached much nearer to the received ones than mine. As the conversation proceeded, I became dissatisfied with the tone of my own share in it (Wollstonecraft 1993, p. 99).

This description certainly matches Wollstonecraft's writings at the time – this was before she had written her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. She had already written her *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, a republican text, defending Price against an attack by Burke in his *Thoughts on the Revolution in France*. In that text she argues that to act according to reason is to act according to God's laws (p. 52). But because Thomas Paine's own response to Burke, *The Rights of Man*, had also been published, and because Paine was famous, not just for his republican writings, but for his role in the American Revolution, Godwin had perhaps not read Wollstonecraft's pamphlets. That same year Johnson had reprinted Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories from Real Life*, with engravings by Blake. This 1788 text portrays a governess, Mrs. Mason, a paragon of virtue who teaches young children to use their reason properly so that they too can become virtuous and eventually attain eternal salvation. The piety displayed by Mrs. Mason, although rational, is also fairly conventional, which explained the fact that it sold well enough to be reprinted with illustrations. Her first book, *Mary*, also portrays a heroine who, despite being a free-thinker, a woman who listens only to her reason and her heart, is deeply religious, seeking God's love above all else. Lastly, the 1787 *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, concludes the chapter on matrimony as follows:

Principles of religion should be fixed, and the mind not left to fluctuate in the time of distress, when can receive succor from no other quarter. The conviction that everything is working for our good will scarcely produce resignation, when we are deprived of our dearest hopes. How they can be satisfied, who have not this conviction, I cannot conceive; I rather think they will turn to some worldly support, and fall into folly, if not vice. For a little refinement only leads a woman into the wilds of romance, if she is not religious; nay, more, there is no true sentiment without it, nor perhaps any other effectual check to the passions (pp. 102–103).

Perhaps it is unclear whether Wollstonecraft is recommending a strict religious observance or simply that religious beliefs should be firmly held. If the latter, there is not much in the passage that suggests that these beliefs should be shaped according to convention – except in so far that most Christians do accept that God is benevolent.

Later in that same book, specifically in a chapter on the observance of Sundays, indeed, Wollstonecraft distances herself from both the insincere but churchgoing sort of Christians (the “vulgar” who think that “going to church and being religious, are almost synonymous terms”) and from the stricter sects whose “puritanical exactness”

makes religious observance “very irksome” (1787: 124–125). In fact, looking at these later passages, we might be tempted to question Barbara Taylor’s interpretation of *The Thoughts* as being “steeped in orthodox attitudes” (2002: 100).

Godwin in turns hints that her religiosity was a sign of immaturity, bad education, a vivid imagination, and love of nature. But he also suggests that towards the end of her life she was not religious at all, that her religion was nothing more than an aesthetic choice or habit. This comes across in his very moving description of her final days, when, according to him, she failed to invoke God or religion, even though she was in great pain and suspected she was going to die. “Her religion, as I have already shown, was not calculated to be the torment of a sick bed; and, in fact, during her whole illness, not one word of religious cast fell from her lips” (Godwin 1798, p. 195).

On the one hand the passage suggests that Wollstonecraft’s religion was not all doom and gloom, that it was called for by joy and beauty, not by sickness and death. On the other hand, it also strongly hints at the possibility that it was not a set of deeply held beliefs about God and the afterlife – otherwise, would she have not invoked them at a time when any religious person would describe as being on the brink of leaving this life for the next? This passage shows Godwin as less generous than he might be, turning his wife’s final agony as the last word in the argument he and she had during their acquaintance.

Another text has sometimes been read as suggestive that Wollstonecraft did somewhat lose her religion towards the end of her life, a few months before she and Godwin met for the second time and became lovers. In her *Letters from Sweden and Norway* (2013) she writes the following:

I can gather, the inhabitants of Denmark and Norway are the least oppressed people of Europe. ... On the subject of religion they are likewise becoming tolerant, at least, and perhaps have advanced a step further in free-thinking. One writer has ventured to deny the divinity of Jesus Christ, and to question the necessity or utility of the Christian system, without being considered universally as a monster, which would have been the case a few years ago. (p. 92)

Free-thinking is often associated with atheism, and the oppression of reason with religion – at least during the Enlightenment. Condorcet, in his *Sketch of the Progress of Humanity* repeatedly accuses religion and priests of being the enemies of philosophy, of intolerance and intellectual repression. Condorcet followed in the tradition of Voltaire (who although he did not admit to atheism was highly critical of the intolerance shown by official religions), and while atheism was perhaps not the norm in late-eighteenth-century intellectual circles, it was certainly not, as we will see in the next section, exceptional either. Certainly it would not have been a huge leap for a contemporary reader of Wollstonecraft to suppose that she was an atheist upon reading this passage from the *Letters*.

A modern reader might also think that for a Gentile English woman to reject Christianity in the eighteenth century would leave no options for a different sort of religion – hence she must be praising the rise of atheism. However, one must bear in mind, while reading this passage, that the Rational Dissenters, among whom Wollstonecraft counted many friends and mentors, did deny the divinity of Christ, while

remaining, for the most part, deeply religious. They too were victims of intolerance – barred from universities and professions because they did not belong to the Church of England. So it is hardly surprising that Wollstonecraft would praise a nation that avoided such intolerance, and is perhaps more of a defense of her dissenter friends than it is of atheism.

Let us review the evidence presented here. Godwin tells us that Wollstonecraft started off as a conventional Christian, that her religion was self-taught and little more than an aesthetic attitude, and that by the time she died, it had all but disappeared. Looking at her texts suggests otherwise. In her earliest writings she refrains from advocating strict religious observance and recommends simply that one should hold firm beliefs about the existence of a benevolent deity. In her later works she applauds free-thinking and religious tolerance of the kind that would have been a relief to her friends, the Rational Dissenters.

In the second part of this chapter, I will study the way Wollstonecraft's rational Christianity chimes in with the republican atheists she admired, and how her beliefs in the role of religion fitted with the civic religion advocated by Rousseau and given life in Revolutionary France.

Atheism and Republicanism – Rousseau and the Paris Years

Wollstonecraft arrived in Paris at the end of 1792, tasked with reporting on the progress of the revolution in a set of letters to her publisher. This project became, after a first letter, a book on the early years of the revolution, which she wrote over the next two and a half years, surviving the Terror and also becoming a mother. The beginning of her stay in Paris was not easy. She just had time to find her feet, become acquainted with the intellectual circles of the revolution (at least those where English was spoken) before the Terror struck. At the time she wrote to Johnson that she had not become an atheist, in February 1793, just a few weeks after the execution of the king, Wollstonecraft was dining with the Girondins and their sympathizers – Brissot, Condorcet, Madame Roland, Madame de Genlis (whose works she discusses in her *Vindication*), Helen Maria Williams, Thomas Christie (Johnson's co-publisher), Thomas Paine, and, through him, Theroigne de Merincourt, the courtesan turned revolutionary and feminist activist. By the autumn of that year, most of her new friends were dead or in prison.

The Girondins now have a reputation as moderate revolutionaries. This is the result of a contrast with the government of the Terror, led by the Jacobins, whom they opposed until their death, in October and November 1793. But this is a misleading characterization, as politically the Girondins were perhaps more radical than the Jacobins. They were republicans, and advocated a representative government without a king before the Jacobins – in 1792, Brissot, Paine, and Condorcet brought out a journal called *Le Républicain*, the aim of which was to make the concept of a republic better known and therefore less scary. Madame Roland (1827) tells us that when Robespierre heard of it, he giggled nervously and bit his nails (p. 365). The Girondins were also more open to an international exchange with other republics, especially that of America, whereas the Jacobins were more conservative and wished to preserve France's autonomy by not developing ties with the rest of the world.

Although none of them agreed with, or supported, the abuses perpetuated during the revolution on convents and monasteries, the Girondins were, for the most part, atheists. Robespierre was a deist – Condorcet, Brissot, and Madame Roland, were openly atheist. Robespierre instituted the Cult of the Supreme Being, after abolishing the Cult of Reason in 1794. The Cult of the Supreme Being followed Rousseau's recommendation for a civic religion, one that served a different purpose from, but was not incompatible with, a private religion.

One reason why one might expect the Girondins to reject religion is the fact that many of them were scholars or writers who had read and thought about the texts of the Enlightenment. As we saw earlier, Condorcet, in his last work, the *Sketch of the Progress of Human Reason*, presents religion as the antithesis of enlightenment, based on lies, and the enemy of reason and independent or critical thought. All were influenced by Rousseau, who although once a Catholic praised the private sort of religion that did not require public or official displays, and of course Voltaire who mocked the bigotry attached to so many religious practices, and recommended instead toleration, setting up England as a successful model of religious cohabitation. Wollstonecraft would have realized, of course, that not all was right even in England, as her friends and colleagues, the Rational Dissenters, were excluded from universities and public service.

It seems that Wollstonecraft could have found much common ground with her Girondin friends, politically and morally, without having to give in to their atheistic tendencies. Their critique of religion was always based on the oppressive behavior of institutions, and the dogmatic teachings of the Church, yet never on personal faith. This explains how several Girondin thinkers, including Madame Roland and Sophie de Grouchy (the Marquise de Condorcet) were able to lose their faith through reading Rousseau during their adolescence – despite the fact that Rousseau himself was not an atheist. Paine, who was also not an atheist, described the French of that period as “running headlong into atheism,” and saw his role in writing the *Age of Reason* as diverting them from that path, showing them that one could be reasonable, defend the values of the Enlightenment and of the revolution, while believing in God.⁵

The Girondins' atheism may have resonated with some of Wollstonecraft's own views on religion, in particular with regards to toleration. The comment we came across in the previous section about the Norwegian free-thinkers who were allowed to reject the trinity made a lot of sense, we saw, in relation to what Wollstonecraft had observed among her friends the Dissenters. These tended to be devout Christians, of a sort that she admired, because their beliefs placed equality at the center of any deliberation on humankind, their life's effort were directed at reason and education, encouraging, in particular, enterprises centered around the education of women, such as the publication of Wollstonecraft's several books on that subject, but also the two schools she was able to open thanks to Dissenters' patronage. At the same time, the Dissenters rejected the trinity and the divinity of Christ. So clearly, doing so did not signify atheism for Wollstonecraft – simply dissent, and dissent of a kind that she was used to and admired.

Another common ground between Wollstonecraft and her Rousseau-reading Girondin friends was the importance she placed on civic virtues and their quasi religious display and organization. One civic purpose of religion, as far as Wollstonecraft was concerned, was the reining in of harmful passions that might interfere with just proceedings. In *Thoughts*, we saw, women need strict religion not to become slaves to

their passions. But later, Wollstonecraft placed more importance on civic virtue and education, and while religion does inform her thoughts on what makes a good system of virtue, it is sometimes characterized as harmful and she often recommends that it should be private, so as to avoid socially guided displays of fake devotion. She is angered by the suggestion (from John Gregory) that women should be pious simply because men dislike impiety in them, or that they should follow their husbands in matters of religion rather than attempting to think through religious principles for themselves (Rousseau), or that praying in church puts a woman's face in the best light and therefore will help attract a husband (Fordyce).⁶ These recommendations, one should note, are all taken from treatises on education, so that Wollstonecraft feels that she has to take them on directly in her own work on that topic.

But there is more to civic education, and to the place of religion in civic education, for Wollstonecraft than simply the guarantee of good marital behavior. Wollstonecraft was undoubtedly influenced by Rousseau on the topic of civic religion as on many others. Rousseau (1994) argued, in the final chapter of the *Social Contract*, that there were two kinds of religion: religion of man, and religion of citizen. The first is private, without any official or public worship, a cult of moral duty. Rousseau calls it the religion of the gospel, or old Christianity, and gives it the title of true theism. The second spells out rights within a nation, and promotes allegiance to the laws of that nation in accordance with spiritual dictates. Rousseau characterizes this sort of religion as bad because it is based on lies, but at the same time useful in drawing support for the nation and promoting patriotism. Rousseau also says that there is a third "bizarre" kind of religion, which gives citizens a second government, forcing them into contradictory allegiances. He cites Roman Catholicism (the religion to which he converted in early adulthood) as an example.

The difference between a purely civic code, such as was advocated by the Cult of Reason, in the early days of the French Revolution, and a civic religion, such as proposed by Rousseau and exemplified by Robespierre's Cult of the Supreme Being, is that the latter is grounded in the existence of a real (private) religious sentiment. A nation of atheists is less likely to be moved to obey a civic religion than a nation of theists. But obeying a civic religion does not count as an act of faith in the same way that obeying one's private religion does. The purely civic religion sets up the laws of the nation as grounded on a sentiment of sociability without which it is impossible to be a good citizen or faithful subject. It utilizes religious virtues to create citizens who care about the good of their nation:

There is therefore a purely civil profession of faith, the articles of which it is the business of the Sovereign to determine; not exactly as religious dogmas, but as social sentiments of sociability, without which it is impossible to be either a good citizen or a loyal subject. Although it cannot force anyone to believe them, it can banish from the State whoever does not believe them; he can be banished, not for impiety, but for being unsociable, and for being incapable of cherishing the laws and justice sincerely, or of sacrificing, at need, his life to his duty. (1994, p. 166)

Rousseau's civil religion just falls short of Plato's noble lie, because it takes in the thought that citizens have a private religion, which Rousseau does not believe to be lies,

and which grounds the religion of the state by applying the sentiments dictated by personal religion to pious allegiance to one's community. There are undoubtedly lies in the foundations of civic religion – especially in the case of a theocracy, where the political ruler claims to be descended from, or appointed by a deity. But these lies do not force or impede what people truly believe – they merely help their behavior become more beneficial to the society they live in.

It seems as though Wollstonecraft agrees with Rousseau as to what the “religion of man” consists in: it has to be private, because otherwise it is not sincere. Like Rousseau she also has doubt about the “Priestly religion,” that is, a cult is dictated by an authority that is neither the self nor the state. She particularly dislikes Roman Catholicism, and believes it is to blame for many of the vices of pre-revolution France, encouraging treachery and dishonesty, simply because one serves not one but two masters. However, it is not clear whether her understanding of the role of religion in the running of society brings her closer to the atheist's Cult of Reason, or to the Rousseau-inspired Cult of the Supreme Being.

The Cult of Reason, instituted in 1794, was the natural conclusion of what the Girondins, Wollstonecraft's guillotined friends, had believed, but enforced with the Jacobins' iron hand. The Cult of Reason was presented as a way of securing freedom by defeating ignorance – reason replacing the lies of religion with eternal truths and the virtues that seek and preserve them.⁷

Much of this would have been taken on board by Wollstonecraft, who agreed with the philosophers of the Enlightenment that religion had too long been the instrument of suppressing reason and enforcing superstition, thus “enslaving” the people to the priests, and preventing them from ever freeing themselves. Reason, she argues, must be fully developed in order to want freedom. But a system of education that does not encourage independent thought and does not strengthen the intellect results in a stilted mind, which only wants what it has and sees no better future for itself. So just as, she said, the peasants of France did not spontaneously rebel as soon as they could, but carried on acting as slaves, rich women do not, for the most part, have the desire to “break their chains” but instead value the fact that men fuss over them and give them clothes and jewels for which they “neither toil nor spin” more than they value reason, freedom, and independence (Wollstonecraft 1993, pp. 112, 121).

The purpose of a civic religion is to unite a people in defense of their nation, to help them put the nation before their own needs. The Cult of Reason was in that sense a civic religion, declaring the people to be the only god and reason the source of all virtues. But Rousseau's civic religion did have theistic elements: including amongst its dogmas the existence of a benevolent and intelligent god, an afterlife, a system of divine rewards and punishment, and the sanctity of the law. While it is not clear to what extent Wollstonecraft accepted such a theistic civic code she certainly believed in the importance of civic virtues. Virtuous men and women, she argued, would benefit the state, and help a republic survive and grow. Vicious people, on the other hand, would undermine it. Particular care was to be taken in the formation of the young, so that they could become good citizens who valued liberty and were responsible in helping preserve it in each other. But this meant that parents should be virtuous, that mothers and fathers should fulfill their “sacred duty” to look after their children well (1993, p. 227).

Reference to the sacred here is the closest we come to a suggestion that civic duties and virtues are in any way religious. There would be nothing wrong with interpreting what Wollstonecraft says here in the language of atheism, following the model of the Cult of Reason. In order to get a clearer idea of what she may have meant, we need to investigate, next, the place of religion in Wollstonecraft's feminist thought, in particular in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

Man, Woman and God

In this final section, I will discuss how Wollstonecraft's attitude to religion in her major work, a *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, fits in with the tradition of atheist feminism. I will argue that Wollstonecraft not only rejects the very same principles that feminists object to in religion, but also promotes a religious outlook that reinforces certain feminist principles.

As Barbara Taylor remarks, Wollstonecraft's religious stance "may seem a long way from recent feminist ambitions" (2002, p. 116). Mainstream feminism has been associated with atheism since the beginning of the twentieth century and Wollstonecraft's religiosity makes her seem too behind the time to be relevant, perhaps.⁸

It is likely that Godwin's equivocations on the subject of his wife's religion, together with the fact that Wollstonecraft had no compunction about attacking prominent interpretations of the bible, helped a number of feminist atheists overlook her deism at first. So Emma Goldman, for instance, discusses Wollstonecraft's religion without even, it seems, noticing that she is. Describing Wollstonecraft's father and the effect he had on her childhood, Goldman writes: "Who could stay him, the creator of the universe?" (quoted in Wexler 1981, p. 115). But Wollstonecraft did fight back against her father, she did stay him, and did not simply obey, as Goldman herself was bound to, until she left home. Perhaps one reason why Wollstonecraft was able to stay her father, at times preventing him from physically abusing her mother, was her awareness of the fact that he was not the creator of the universe, that he was a mere mortal, and not a very successful one at that. Indeed, a strong theme in Wollstonecraft's theological reflections is always that man is not the face of God, reason is, so that a man is not to be obeyed simply because he is a man, and a woman not to be subordinated simply because she is a woman.

Goldman also touches indirectly on Wollstonecraft's combative attitude towards religion when she says "she was destined by her very nature to become the Iconoclast of the false Gods whose standards the World demanded her to obey" (Wexler 1981, p.; 115). The false gods she refers to are not the gods of religion – Goldman is talking about Wollstonecraft's revolution in manners, her battle against the prejudices specifically attached to the education and behavior of women. But she would also be right if that sentence were literal rather than metaphorical. Wollstonecraft does attack what she perceives as pernicious readings of the bible, which do not allow for women to be the equal to men, either in this life or the afterlife. That she was not perceived as an iconoclast was more of a sign that England in the late eighteenth century was able to tolerate challenges to its educational system and its social and religious habits.

Wollstonecraft was only ever harshly criticized for her defense of the French Revolution, not for her feminism, nor her religious views.⁹

When Goldman uses religious language to describe Wollstonecraft's struggle with her father, she of course hits the nail on the head: the main reason why so many feminists came to be atheists was that they saw religion as a direct expression and a vindication of patriarchy. As Simone de Beauvoir said:

Man enjoys the great advantage of having a God endorse the codes he writes; and since man exercises a sovereign authority over woman, it is especially fortunate that this authority has been vested in him by the Supreme Being. For the Jews, Mohammedans, and the Christians, among others, man is master by divine right; the fear of God, therefore, will repress any impulse toward revolt in the downtrodden female. (1972, p. 632)

But what is perhaps most significant about Wollstonecraft's approach to religion is the extent to which she rejects this interpretation, arguing at every opportunity that it is reason, not man, which is the reflection of God, and that reason is genderless. The fact that she calls God "the Supreme Being" is not only a sign of Rousseau's influence, but of her allegiance to "enlightened" religion which calls on reason before it does on the priest, or on the bible. "The only solid foundation for morality appears to be the character of the Supreme Being; the harmony of which arises from a balance of attributes; and, to speak with reverence, one attribute seems to imply the necessity of another. He must be just because he is wise, he must be good, because he is omnipotent" (Wollstonecraft 1993, p. 113). Wollstonecraft is quite clear that by questioning religious male supremacy she is running the risk of being called an atheist. But this also means that she is confident that she is not that.

I may be allowed to doubt whether woman were created for man; and, though the cry of irreligion, or even atheism, be raised against me, I will simply declare, that were an angel from heaven to tell me that Moses's beautiful, poetical cosmogony, and the account of the fall of man, were literally true, I could not believe what my reason told me was derogatory to the character of the Supreme Being. (Wollstonecraft 1993, p. 92)

This is not to say that her thoughts on male supremacy and religion are not intricately tied together. Botting (2006) makes a convincing case for the evolution of Wollstonecraft's theology as parallel to the evolution of her thought on the family. Wollstonecraft, argues Botting, moves from a deep and spiritual Christianity which is a reaction to the immutability she perceives in the patriarchal structure of the family, to a more liberal, optimistic belief inspired by the proposed reforms of the Dissenters, before losing her faith in the benevolence of God and perfectibility of human nature when faced with the failures of the French Revolution and the continued oppression of women within marriage. What I am suggesting here is that her theology did not become separated from her trust in reason, and that even when her trust in the possibility of reform dwindled, she remained committed to the empire of reason inspired by the Dissenters' religion. In particular, what follows from this understanding of God as reason is that religion does not, for Wollstonecraft, legitimize patriarchy, as men are no closer to God than women, no more capable of becoming so through developing their reason:

I love man as my fellow; but his sceptre, real or usurped, extends not to me, unless the reason of an individual demands my homage; and even then the submission is to reason, and not to man. In fact, the conduct of an accountable being must be regulated by the operations of its own reason; or on what foundation rests the throne of God? (Wollstonecraft 1993, p. 103)

Conclusion

Wollstonecraft was not an atheist, and what we can learn from her writings on the subject of religion is twofold. First, most of the atheism that accompanied the French Revolution was a reaction to the particular excesses of the Catholic Church, and to the absence of tolerance for the existence of religious sects that would preach a more reasonable approach to the divine. Secondly, the rejection of Wollstonecraft by contemporary feminists on the grounds that she was religious supposes a similar mistake. Just as not all religion must be as oppressive as Catholicism was in eighteenth-century France, not all of religion need defend patriarchal values. Indeed, just as Thomas Paine attempted to put forward a more reason-friendly account of religion to the French revolutionary – he was imprisoned before the manuscript was published – Wollstonecraft is arguing that the principles of a true religion would in fact go against patriarchy and offer a gender-neutral account of reason, freedom, virtue, and citizenship. In other words, Wollstonecraft would not only share contemporary feminists' beliefs that patriarchy is harmful, but she would argue that the right kind of religious thinking may help defeat it.

Notes

- 1 "Letter on the present character of the French Nation," intended as the first of a series for Johnson, dated 15 February 1793.
- 2 Suicide was then perceived as a sin, and there was a strong stigma attached to mental illness such as the depression that led Wollstonecraft to attempt suicide.
- 3 *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (VRW) was not reprinted after 1796 and by the mid-nineteenth century, it was hard to find, according to George Eliot's review essay (Eliot 1855).
- 4 See Swift (2014, p. 133); and Taylor (2002, p. 101)
- 5 See Claeys (1989, p. 180).
- 6 For discussions of Gregory, Fordyce, and Rousseau, see VRW, chapter V, sections 1, 2 and 3.
- 7 See Brunel's speech, "Nécessité du Culte de la Raison," *Au Rocher-de-la-liberté*, Imprimerie Nationale chez Gaumont, an II.
- 8 Snitow (2015, p. 44) talks about Wollstonecraft's appeal to religion coming across as a "dead letter" to feminists. An earlier edition of Snitow (1996) is cited by Taylor (2002: 99).
- 9 The famous sobriquet "Hyena in petticoat" was given to her by Moore after he read her *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, not *Rights of Woman*.

References

- Botting, E. (2006) *Family Feuds: Wollstonecraft, Burke and Rousseau on the Transformation of the Family*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

- Claeys, G. (1989) *Thomas Paine, Social and Political Thought*. Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman.
- De Beauvoir, S. (1972) *The Second Sex*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.
- Eliot, G. (1855) "Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft." *The Leader* 6: 988–989.
- Godwin, W. (1798) *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 2nd edn. London: J. Johnson.
- Roland, M. (1827) *Mémoires*, I, 3rd edition, ed. MM. Berville et Barriere. Paris: Baudoin Freres.
- Rousseau, J. (1979) *Emile; or: On Education*, trans. A. Bloom. New York: Basic Books.
- Rousseau, J. (1994) *The Social Contract*, trans. R. Betts. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Snitow, A. (2015) *The Feminism of Uncertainty: A Gender Diary*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Swift, S. (2014) "Wollstonecraft's Religious Characters." in E. Steiner (ed.) *Called to Civil Existence*. Amsterdam: Rodopi Press, pp. 131–154.
- Taylor, B. (2002) "The religious foundations of Mary Wollstonecraft's feminism," in C. Johnson (ed.) *Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.99–118.
- Wexler, A. (1981) "Emma Goldman on Mary Wollstonecraft." *Feminist Studies* 7: 113–133.
- Wollstonecraft, M. (1787) *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*. London: J. Johnson.
- Wollstonecraft, M. (1993) *A Vindication of the Rights of Men; A Vindication of the Rights of Woman; An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution*, ed. J. Todd. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wollstonecraft, M. (2013) *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, ed. I. Horricks. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press.

Cady Stanton

CLAUDETTE FILLARD

Finding one's way through the maze of religion and philosophy in nineteenth-century America was no easy task, as Elizabeth Cady Stanton herself was to experience. She was born in November 1815, in Johnstown (NY), the daughter of Daniel Cady, a prominent lawyer and politician at the head of a Scottish Presbyterian family. From the outset, in a rather gloomy household environment, young Elizabeth held an agonizing view of herself, and "early believed herself a veritable child of the Evil One" who would come "some night and claim her as his own" (*Eighty Years*, Stanton 1993a, p. 25). Her lifelong quest for truth and liberty was indeed triggered off by such turmoils of her early spiritual life.

After graduating from the Johnstown Academy, as no girl then was allowed to attend college, she left for the Troy Female Seminary in 1831, which increased her frustration at having been born a girl. She was then still a prey to the strict Calvinism of her upbringing. But the Second Great Awakening, a Protestant religious revival movement of the early nineteenth century, turned upstate New York into the "burned-over district," known for its enthusiastic support of it. The Grand Troy Revival of 1831 was notable for the Reverend Charles Grandson Finney, one of the most prominent revivalist preachers at the time. Many girls in Troy fell under the spell of his call for personal reformation, and his vision of puritanism without predestination. Elizabeth attended a six-week revival he conducted, which did not bring the comfort she needed. She later called him "a terrifier of human souls" (Kern 2002, p. 41) and the way she depicted him is reminiscent of Johnathan Edwards, the eighteenth-century Puritan theologian addressing his audience as "sinners in the hands of an angry God" in his fiery sermons. Young Elizabeth was paralyzed by the thought of her own depravity, and frightened by Finney's "great eyes rolling around the congregation and his arms flying in the air" (Stanton 1993a, p. 41); Fitzgerald (1985, p. 24). The trauma was not yet over when, seventy years later, she considered that nothing was worse than the sufferings of her childhood and youth due to what she referred to as "the dogmas which I sincerely

believed and the gloom connected with everything associated with the name of religion, the church, the parsonage, the graveyard, and the solemn tolling bells ..." (Stanton 1993a, p. 24–26; Gaylor 2012, pp. 153, 172).

Back to Johnstown after graduation in 1833 she fell into an intense depression. So much so that her father, her sister Tryphena, and her sister's husband Edward Bayard, took her on a trip to Niagara, a healthy period of vacation with a regimen of moral philosophy and fresh air. Edward Bayard, who was highly critical of strict Calvinism, introduced her to the rational moral philosophy of George Combe whose *Constitution of Man* (1828) which was denounced for its materialism and atheism, was a best-seller. Her perception of herself as an individual then changed drastically. She rejected Finney's faith, but preserved the emphasis on individual moral regeneration (Banner 1980, p. 75). She was then freed from the obsessive contemplation of her damnation. As she was to write for the *Chicago Record* on 29 June 1897: "that disabused my mind of hell and the devil and of a cruel, avenging God, and I have never believed in them since" (Gaylor 2012, p. 104). This was her first step toward religious liberation, and it was reinforced by the life she led for a while. She enjoyed playing chess and riding horses, and the many moments she spent at her cousin Gerrit Smith's home in Peterboro (NY). The Smiths' insistence that "God is Love" gave quite a different ring from the language of fear, death, and damnation which had surrounded her life so far. Moreover, Gerrit Smith was a philanthropist, and a reformer. His place became a center for antislavery radicalism where young Elizabeth met Henry Stanton, an abolitionist whom she married on 1 May 1840.

The newlyweds attended the World Antislavery Convention held in London on 12–13 June of the same year. Serving as their honeymoon trip, the event was a watershed and defining moment in Elizabeth Cady Stanton's life and career. Indeed it is often regarded as the real beginning of the women's rights movement. So much so that Stanton's rendering of it is what opens the series of six volumes of papers published by Ann Gordon. To begin with, women delegates were refused access to the Convention, and after a whole day devoted to a discussion of the "problem" they were reluctantly tolerated in a separate gallery, without any right to speak. This sparked the indignation of the young rebel who had grown tired of the "everlasting no" imposed on girls in her early life, had refused to promise obedience to her husband during the wedding ceremony, and had insisted on keeping her maiden name together with her husband's. In her vivid depiction of the event in her *Autobiography* she clearly laid the blame on the clergy: "The clerical portion of the convention was most violent in its opposition ... The clergymen seemed to have God and his angels especially in their care and keeping, and were in agony lest the women should do or say something to shock the heavenly ghosts" (Stanton 1993a, p. 79).

She mocked the clergymen who, bible in hand, were no more than "narrow-minded bigots." In a letter of 25 May 1852, she complained that the attitude of the clergy brought her to "the boiling point" (Gornick 2005, p. 26) and the peak of her devastating anticlericalism was reached in the same letter to Susan B. Anthony when she wrote that "the church is the great engine of oppression in our day" (Gordon 2003, I:198).

The Convention was also a crucial episode due to her meeting of Quaker women involved in the abolition movement. She was attracted by a faith which allowed women

to speak in public and become ministers, a faith so much more hospitable than strict Presbyterianism. Most important of all was her encounter with Lucretia Mott. Stanton was spellbound when she witnessed Mott preaching in a Unitarian church to an audience including men. Even though she did not become a Quaker, this experience came in the nick of time, when young Elizabeth yearned for a religion that would affirm life and individual development. Mott advised her to read Mary Wollstonecraft and Sarah Grimké (Gordon 2003, I:128–129) and became her mentor. Elizabeth Cady Stanton often sought her advice on social and ideological issues and was to write that she was then “emancipated from all faith and man-made creed.”

Back to the United States, the Stantons lived in Boston until 1847. Elizabeth was armed with the reading list provided by Lucretia Mott in London and was surrounded by abolitionists, reformers, politicians, and the religious ideas of the Unitarians and Transcendentalists. She was particularly receptive to Theodore Parker’s philosophy, his radical individualism, his strong impetus toward social activism and the way he questioned authorities like the bible and the Church in conflict with individual conscience. He represented the radical edge of Christianity, wrote about the oneness of God, envisioned a deity including traditionally feminine attributes, and even at times defined God as a mother. There Stanton found the fundamental theological basis for her incipient commitment to feminism. She met the best representatives of nineteenth-century reform: Lydia Child, Parker Pillsbury, Frederick Douglass, John Greenleaf Whittier, Bronson Alcott, Emerson, James Russell Lowell, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. She admired the Transcendentalist experiment in communal living and even visited Brook Farm. One of her biographers was to write that the list of people at her dinner table in Boston read like “a Who’s Who of 19th century reform.” Her spiritual evolution then confirmed Angelina Grimké’s warning and prediction that staying in Boston amounted to a “ticket to perdition” (Gornick 2005, p. 30).

But the Stantons had to leave Boston, and they settled in Seneca Falls, a fairly small place in the state of New York, in a house bought by Judge Cady. Elizabeth already was the mother of three boys (aged 2 to 5) and was to give birth to four more children there. With not enough help for house chores, and no intellectually stimulating environment, she felt rather miserable, and discovered solitude, boredom, and overwork. She then formed contacts with the women of her new community, and became quite sensitive to the kind of hard life most of them led. She made friends with Martha Coffin Wright, Mary Ann Clintoek, and Jane Hunt, all Quakers.

In London, the idea already had sparked between Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton for the organization of a women’s rights convention. It was to materialize eight years later, when Lucretia Mott visited her sister Martha C. Wright in nearby Waterloo. This was an opportunity for the group of friends to meet and ask the *Seneca County Courier* of 14 July 1848 to announce that “a convention to discuss the social, civil and religious condition and rights of women will held in the Wesleyan Chapel, at Seneca Falls, NY on Wednesday and Thursday the 19th and 20th of July current.” The location was not devoid of any symbolic significance since the Wesleyan Chapel, built in 1843 by dissident Methodists, was a haven of freedom and free speech. This was the first convention on women’s rights organized by women, even though they asked James Mott to preside over the debates.

Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton played the major part in this organization. Elizabeth did most of the writing of the *Declaration of Rights and Sentiments* which was to be debated and signed by those attending. It was patterned on the 1776 Declaration of Independence of the United States, with its opening references to God as creator. Adopting the structure of a manifesto, it contained a list of 18 grievances (a manifold indictment of male domination) followed by 11 resolutions. In its list of grievances, man (He) was anaphorically substituted for the king of England (George III), the target of the hypotext. Of course, the demand for women's right to vote resonated like a bombshell, and was the most controversial on the list. But, in accordance with the promise to pay attention to the religious condition of women, it raised some unequivocal accusations against the clergy and man, as evinced by points 13 and 15 (Stanton 1889, pp.70–71):

He allows her in church, as well as State, but a subordinate position, claiming Apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and, with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the Church He has usurped the prerogatives of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action that belongs to her conscience and to God.

Such a vehement indictment of the clergy and their perverted application of the Scriptures led Stanton's opponents to call her an "Infidel" with remarkable stubbornness. But she managed to turn the charge against her accusers, and in a letter to the editors of the *Seneca County Courier* on 23 July, blamed "the religionists of the present day for though they believe in the Divinity of Christ, they deny in theory and practice his Divine commands" (Gordon 2003, I:89). This inaugurated a major evolution in Elizabeth Cady Stanton's life and career. She still was a remarkable religious rebel, but her concerns now reached beyond the personal religious turmoils of early life, and her scathing attacks on the clergy. She had a mission to fulfill, stressing the fate of the oppressed as well as the tyranny of the oppressors. She was determined to turn the demands of the Seneca Falls declaration into promises to be kept. She gradually played a prominent part in the woman's rights crusade, undoubtedly thanks to the faithful help and friendship of Susan B. Anthony.

A Quaker teacher, the latter happened to be attending a conference on the abolition of slavery in Seneca Falls where she met Elizabeth Cady Stanton on 12 May 1851. From then on, they were to live and to work as a real team. Often in charge of babysitting, Susan B. mainly became the organizer, the strategist, the "Bonaparte of the movement" as she was sometimes called, while Elizabeth kept writing speeches and articles, all the while elaborating a philosophy her friend spread unflinchingly.

An inkling of Stanton's mood at the time can be found in one of the early letters to her new friend (25 May 1851), when she insisted that "the church is the great engine of oppression in our day (Gordon 2003, I, 198). She repeatedly tackled such touchy issues as woman's property rights, divorce, prostitution, rape, and birth control and never dodged the inevitable religious confrontations such taboo topics entailed as clearly opposed to church policy. Supporting the idea of a civil government, she objected to the presence of God in the Constitution (Gaylor 2012, p. 128). She entertained a bold conception of marriage as early as 1854, when she regarded it as a civil contract

(Gordon 2003, I:210, 422) that could be cancelled when one of the partners became corrupt or alcoholic. Such concerns became a full-fledged program in her 1860 address to the National Woman's Rights Association which she presided. Her views were soon to be strengthened by John Stuart Mill's *Subjection of Woman*, published in 1869. She could be somewhat amusingly sarcastic in some of her stubborn contentions. Interestingly enough, she provocatively objected to Sunday morning activities advocated by the clergy. Until near the end of her life, she considered that the day could be devoted to bicycling instead of listening to sermons in church (Gaylor 2012; p. 108 in Stanton's 1896 diary). She carried out a solitary but unflinching campaign against some conservative churchmen who opposed "the opening of the libraries, picture galleries, museums and concert hall on the only day when the laboring classes could visit them" ("Our Boys on Sundays," note 84, diary 4 July 1894, Ginzberg 2009, p. 227; see also "Shall the World's Fair be Closed on Sunday?" 1893, Gaylor 2012, p. 159). Such were the reactions of a woman who had "not a moment to commune with the angels" (letter to Isabelle Beecher Hooker, Gaylor 2012, p. 141).

One ought to note, as Ann Gaylor (2012, p. 131) rightly remarks, that she was more virulent and iconoclastic in *The Revolution*, the paper she and Susan B. launched in 1868. In it she could write unedited, to her heart's content. The same could be said about her diary, where total freedom of speech could easily prevail, to the embarrassment of her children who later published her notes and felt that some of them had better be suppressed (Stanton and Stanton 1922). But her more public language, the medium she used when addressing whole crowds, even though she did not relinquish propounding some scathing truths, was more controlled. Yielding to the language of the day with its symbiotic blending of political concerns and religious assumptions still present in the USA today, she knew what kind of style was more likely to impress her audience. She astutely relied on the references and metaphors they enjoyed best, resorting to biblical quotations, a definitely religious phraseology, sometimes even using the apostles or Christ himself as her mouthpieces. When on the campaign trail in the 1870s, or speaking as president of the National Woman Suffrage Association she liked to preach, pray, and sound like a prophet. She knew this was for her the best way of persuading her audience that what she said was *gospel truth*, the medium then serving the message.

Her tone could be very different when a kind of etymological logic led her to reach the acme of radicalism with her approach to the bible, in many ways the root of evil. The inception of her concern for the bible, its meaning(s) and influence, dated back to a rather early part of her career. It could be surmised from her response to the 1840 London Convention. It was also made crystal clear through some inflammatory statements in the letter she and Elizabeth McClintock wrote to the editors of the *Seneca County Courier* on 23 July 1848. Mincing no words, she then bluntly asserted that:

No reform has ever been started but the Bible, falsely interpreted, has opposed it. Wine-drinking was proved to be right by the Bible. Slavery was proved to be an institution of the Bible. War, with its long train of calamities and abominations is proved to be right by the Bible. Capital punishment is taught in the Bible. Now, it seems to us, the time has fully come for this much abused book to change hands. (Gordon 2003, I:89)

Making it “change hands” is what she attempted to do when she set her mind to proposing a new interpretation of the text. The task was stupendous in more ways than one. From the outset, organizing such an uphill task proved to be a rocky road. Taking it upon herself to encourage “women’s right to interpret the Bible, as men did,” as she wrote in the 8 April 1869 issue of *The Revolution*, she assembled a committee of 30 women. But only seven of them contributed to Volume I of *The Woman’s Bible* in 1895 and eight to volume II in 1898 (Gaylor 2012, p. 161). Such a desertion by so many of them could have persuaded her that she was about to cry in the wilderness. But nothing deterred her.

Her method was clearly defined in the introduction to Volume I where she insisted that “the object is to revise only those texts and chapters directly referring to women, and those also in which women are made prominent by exclusion” (Stanton 1993b, p. 8). Her purpose was also unequivocally delineated, through her ironically euphemistic assertion that “whatever the Bible may be made to do in Hebrew or Greek, in plain English it does not exalt or dignify women.” The whole project was bolstered up by her conviction that when women began translating the book for themselves they would “have a new evangel of womanhood, wifehood and motherhood” (Gaylor 2012, p. 134). Kathi Kern, in her incomparable book about *Mrs. Stanton’s Bible* (2002) objected to *The Woman’s Bible* as a title which nonetheless suggested that all women were included in the generic word. The line was clearly drawn between “womanhood” and “motherhood” or “wifehood,” thereby revealing the attention Stanton paid to the meaning of words, an attention necessary to a responsible, reasonable way of thinking.

Among the “texts and chapters directly referring to women” which she chose to expatiate on, some really came out as particularly striking and insistent. Her reading of some key passages of Genesis were unabashedly iconoclastic. She maintained that many indignities had their root in the doctrine of original sin, thus opposing the clergy so apt to denounce Eve’s guilt (Gaylor 2012, p. 120). She also rejected the passages which made woman an afterthought of the creation, someone needed only because man needed to have a “help-mate” (Genesis 2:18). In her speech on “the Christian Church and Women” in 1882 (Gaylor 2012, pp. 118–119) she had already pinpointed the most debatable parts of St Paul’s epistles, which were to become some of her favorite targets. Such was, for example, his insistence that “neither was man created for woman, but woman for man” in a text exhorting wives to “submit themselves unto their husbands as unto the Lord” (I Corinthians 11:9). Several other “invidious” examples were denounced by Stanton, all in accordance with the major tenets spread in the USA by a reliance on William Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1723–1780). Moreover, her close analysis of the bible when she worked on the text to publish her second volume, enabled her to expose some of the contradictions regarding the situation of woman, through “two opposite accounts of the creation on woman and her true position, and two opposite interpretations of the will of God concerning her true sphere of action” (Gaylor 2012, p. 126). Strictly speaking, what troubled her most was not so much the bible itself as the way it was used, as revealed in her 1848 letter where she still defined it as “the great charter of human rights when it is taken in its true spiritual meaning” (Gordon 2003, I:88–89). As opposed to this, the fundamentalist attitude of the clergy aimed at imposing authority instead of truth.

She also objected to the faulty attitude consisting in the fragmentation of the text into bits and pieces and the sampling of some passages to doubtful purpose. In her 1879 St Louis speech she chose, among others, the example of the drunkards and distillers who justified their opposition to the temperance movement because Christ made wine. This came after her crucial statement that “although the spirit and principles of the Bible teach justice, mercy and equality, narrow minds uniformly dwell on the letter and misquote and misapply isolated texts of Scripture, to turn this Magna Carta of human rights into an engine of oppression” (Gordon 2003, III:447).

Some other faulty interpretations, perhaps not so clearly ill-disposed, could lead to similar unfortunate conclusions and consequences. Such was the case of errors ascribable to badly translated passages proceeding from a poor knowledge of the Greek and Hebrew languages. Many such mistakes in the English editions of the bible had already been signaled in the past, by Benjamin Disraeli among others, as Stanton noted in her sermon on “The Christian Church and Women” in 1888 (Gaylor 2012, p. 119). She already had mentioned examples of such weaknesses in her 1879 speech and she adopted a line of thought previously expounded by Sarah Grimké. Even though Paul was one of her main concerns, she explained how in his advice to women not to “speak in the churches,” “speak” was a wrong interpretation of the Greek *laleo* used in the original, whose meaning was “chatter.” The problematic linguistic aspect was aggravated by an ignorance of the mores of ancient days. In the present case, the choice of “speak” instead of “chatter” in modern translations was due to the fact that women in those days and in the Eastern nations used to be disorderly in public assemblies, chattering with each other, playing with their children – in many ways disturbing the solemn services. Stanton insisted that the epistles were applicable to the women of the church of Corinth, and not to “the educated, enlightened women of our American churches in this nineteenth century” (Gordon 2003, III:455). As she repeatedly noted, such passages from Paul and other apostles should have been examined in the light of the times in which they were written. Similar warnings against anachronistic interpretations had already been expressed by Lucretia Mott in 1849, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton found it more and more difficult to understand how people could take at face value what had been written for ancient ages. She wondered how historians of the Church themselves could still propose interpretations irrelevant to modern times. She showed how an appeal to textual analysis and historical criticism could act as safeguards against many erratic assertions especially after the Civil War, in an age of new scientific discoveries which gradually bore on religious thought. The studies of scripture began to be characterized by historical-critical and scientific method. Stanton herself was not impervious to the spirit of the age, convinced as she was that “the time has come to study religion as a science,” as stated in an 1897 article devoted to the crucial problem of “reading the Bible in the public schools” (Gordon 2003, III:144).

Her receptiveness to some late nineteenth-century theories carried her to extremes when she dared to assert in an 1888 sermon, “the Christian Church and Women,” that the bible could not be God’s word but “emanated, in common with all church literature, from the brain of man” (Gaylor 2012, p. 124). She sadly considered that “there is nothing more pathetic than the hopeless resignation of woman to the outrages she has been taught to believe are ordained by God.” Such pronouncements reached far beyond the various objections she had pointed out so far and her final stance, in a nutshell, can

be found in this conclusion to the appendix to the second part of *The Woman's Bible* (213–214): “Though it is full of contradictions, absurdities, and impossibilities, and bears the strongest evidence in every line of its human origin, and in moral sentiment is below many of the best books of our own day, they blindly worship it as the work of God” (Gaylor, 2012, p. 169).

Somehow, she then reached the acme of “infidelity” and the harshness of her indictment may echo some of Thomas Paine’s words about the bible in *The Age of Reason*. Even though she never proved to be so extreme as the latter when he repeatedly denounced the bible as forgery, her pronouncements definitely ran against the grain of many of her contemporaries, including supporters of women’s rights. Whereas the word “religion” etymologically suggests what binds together, Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s inflammatory conclusions eventually proved to be divisive and raised the fundamental issue of her unsteady influence.

Early sales of the book seem to be promising, with seven printings in six months and later translations into several languages (Fitzgerald 1993, xxix). Up to a point, one could maintain, as Kathi Kern (2002, p. 217) does, that in a way “the Bigots promoted the sales.” But they launched a very rocky road for its author. *The Woman's Bible* soon proved to be the source of a widespread controversy, marked by an outcry against Stanton’s call for the spiritual autonomy of women without the help of the Church or clergy. Its disruption of the gendered hierarchy supposedly ordained by the word of God could hardly be palatable to the conservative mindset and religious environment of the late nineteenth century in the USA.

The most momentous event occurred with the 28th annual convention of the National American Women Suffrage Association (NAWSA) in January 1896. Stanton was still honorary president of the association, but she was not present among the several hundred women attending the convention. Without naming her, the corresponding secretary’s report denounced Stanton’s initiative and harshly criticized the lack of literary or scholarly value of the book – a rather lame argument since only eight of the ladies had read it. Stanton’s supporters Clara Colby and Lillie Devereux Blake could not silence the pack of protesters even though they rushed to Stanton’s defense. Susan B. Anthony, then NAWSA president, tried her best to suppress the rebellion among her “nieces,” as she now called the young leaders of the movement. But they were adamant in their opposition, and a convention resolution on *The Woman's Bible* was eventually proposed, which in harsh words stressed the non-sectarian nature of the association, and denied that there could be any connection between it and the book. It was justified by such new leaders as Carry Chapman Catt, fearing that it would harm the cause and drive away some of the women suffragists. Susan B. Anthony expressed her qualms about a resolution which, in her eyes, amounted to a vote of censure. Charlotte Perkins Gilman echoed such views and she and other women present proposed some amendments. To no avail: all their amendments were defeated. In the end the unamended resolution came to vote and passed by a margin of 53 to 41. Susan B. Anthony was the only officer of the organization who voted against the text. This clearly showed the determination of the convention leaders bent on disgracing Stanton.

At first, she seemed to remain undeterred. But her isolation and declining physical condition worried her, and she measured the high price she was paying for her iconoclastic propensity. What added to her increasing unease was the denunciation of

The Woman's Bible by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union in its own 1896 convention. Their response added fuel to the fire of the NAWSA resolution and more and more numerous conflicting reactions emerged. A consistently adverse campaign was conducted by the *Woman's Journal*, the weekly periodical created by Lucy Stone and her husband Henry Blackwell in 1870, as a kind of rival publication of the more radical *Revolution*. Jewish women for their part were troubled by the attacks on the Pentateuch. Voicing her opinion for *The Truth*, a lady derided women behaving like fools "when they leave their proper place" in that case having "no more sense than hens" (Kern 2002, p. 176), in words reminiscent John Adams's denunciation of "hens that crow" in his opposition to "the tyranny of the petticoat" on the eve of American independence.

Fortunately, Stanton won the support of some clerical defenders like Rev. Alexander Kent of the First Universalist Church of Washington DC who found her analysis of Genesis inspiring (not a common opinion!). But the clearest, unadulterated approval came from free-thinkers who called her "the Thomas Paine of her day and generation and the female Voltaire of the last years of the 19th century" (Kern 2002, p. 209). The *Free Thought Magazine* and its editor Horace L. Green suggested the 1896 resolution should be rescinded, and that Elizabeth Cady Stanton should be gratefully thanked for the grand and noble work she was engaged in, and even compared her to the great misunderstood heretics of history. (Kern 2002, pp. 196, 198). As a matter of fact, Elizabeth Cady Stanton sent a volume of her book to quite a few readers, in the United States and beyond, asking them to answer some questions about the positive *or* negative impact of the bible on the emancipation of women. A collection of their answers was published in the appendix to *The Woman's Bible* (1993b). Such opinions, bearing now on the bible itself, now on Stanton's book, read like so many points in an illuminating exoteric debate. But despite such a last ditch attempt at being heard as objectively as possible, Stanton was silenced.

Volume 6 of Ann Gordon's (2003) *Selected Papers* is aptly entitled "An Awful Hush." The trustees of several libraries limited the circulation of *The Woman's Bible*. Among others, in 1898, the Board of Censors of the Topeka, Kansas, Federation of Women's Clubs voted for the exclusion of the book from its reading lists. Here again such censorship was not based on a serious reading of the book, but rather on hearsay and ingrained prejudice. Stanton then must have felt the "Solitude of Self" which had been the title of the speech she delivered in 1892 when she resigned the presidency of the suffrage movement, a speech often deemed "one of the most moving statements of feminism of any age" (Stanton 2007, p. 247).

Soon after the celebration of her 80th birthday, one can consider that Elizabeth Cady Stanton no longer was the mother of the movement, which was "decapitated," in Susan B. Anthony's words. The "infidel" fell into disrepute mainly because of her opponents' preference for pragmatism over serious ideological analysis. With their nearly exclusive focus on the ballot, too many people, even among women's rights supporters, overlooked the wide scope of her concerns, leading to the transformation of the suffrage movement at the turn of the century. Susan B. Anthony herself and her young lieutenants were afraid Stanton's approach might derail the movement, whose success depended on a narrow platform. They marginalized Stanton's loyalists like Josephine Henry, Lilly Devereux Blake, and Clara Colby (Kern 2002, p. 20) who lost the convention elections. Real power now belonged to Carry Chapman Catt and new leaders who maintained

control over the NAWSA for quite a while. They harshly criticized the New Thought and Free Thought feminists, whose pronouncements were boycotted as much as possible. Stanton insisted that such a narrowing political focus endangered the traditional crusade for a broadly based emancipation of women, including their liberation from the state, church, and family. But her hopes to convince the conservative members of the NAWSA backfired. The major dividing line and bone of contention was clearly summed up by Susan B. Anthony, who seemed to realize the major clash was about priorities, in 1896 when she addressed Stanton the following words in a letter: “So you will have to keep pegging away saying: ‘get rid of bigotry and then get political rights’ while I shall keep pegging away saying ‘Get political rights first and religious bigotry will melt away like dew before the morning sun’” (20 March 1896, Kern 2002, p. 173; Gordon 2013, IV:61–62:).

With the voting of the 19th amendment to the Constitution granting women the right to vote, Anthony was praised to the skies, even credited with the Seneca Falls Convention she never attended, as historians Elizabeth Griffith and Ellen Dubois demonstrated. In the meantime Stanton was ignored at best. Quite a few celebrations were organized without her or even any mention of her. It seems that the turn of the century marked a kind of nadir in Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s career, and through the stubborn defense of “her” bible, she may have shot herself in the foot. But even though she seemed to have been written out of the official history of the women’s movement, she still had a future and an enduring influence.

Stanton was ahead of her time, and many shades of the second wave of feminism in the United States resonated with her message. The radical feminism which sprang out of the civil rights and peace movements in the late 1960s echoed her wide demands for social change. With her, the “private” became “political,” foreshadowing one of the most famous slogans of the new brand of feminism. In her foreword to the 1993 edition of *The Woman’s Bible*, Maureen Fitzgerald aptly uses “the religious is private is political” as her title, thereby stressing the connection between religion and feminism which underlies the whole of Stanton’s thinking.

Stanton also paved the way for quite a few feminist theologians such as Mary Daly – the author of *The Church and the Second Sex* (1968) – and Rosemary Radford Ruether when she advocated women’s ordination. Many more examples could be called forth, all showing that Stanton laid the groundwork for their rethinking of the bible and its so-far androcentric interpretations.

Assessing the nature of Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s spiritual makeup is a real challenge. In an Internet entry devoted to “Atheist Feminism” she (together with Matilda Gage) ranks second next to Ernestine Rose. Another website provides a long list of quotations supposedly illustrating her “Positive Atheism.” However, nothing in her letters, speeches, and writings of all kinds could compare with Ernestine Rose’s “Defense of Atheism” in 1861 (Gaylor 2012, pp. 73–85). Leaving no stone unturned, in her masterly logic and clarity, the latter unwaveringly asserts the non-existence of God. The selection of Internet quotes just mentioned at most illustrates Stanton’s rebellion against the clergy, and her rejection of “the orthodox religion, as drawn from the Bible and expounded by the church” because it degrades woman and is conducive to despair and death (Gaylor 2012, p. 125). As said above, she denounces pure human inventions

not to be taken as God's words. But this does not preclude her dream of a loving and merciful God. In other words, she never states that there is no God, which after all is the generally accepted definition of Positive Atheism.

At the nadir of her career as "mother of feminism" she still enjoyed the support of free-thinkers, kindred souls in their rejection of authority or tradition. They sided with her even before *The Woman's Bible* was published. So much so that when she addressed the Free Religious Association in Boston, in May 1881, she was introduced as a "good friend for many years" (Gordon 2013, IV:72). Much later, in 1997, Annie Laurie Gaylor, a co-founder in 1976 of the Freedom from Religion Foundation published *Women Without Superstition* (2012), a collection of the writings of women freethinkers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The preface of this invaluable book paid homage to Robert Ingersoll (1833–1899), the "great agnostic" whom Stanton admired greatly, and in the text proper hailed the major role played by Stanton to whom two full well-documented chapters were devoted.

Such special attention is amply justified by Stanton's lifelong attempt to dissipate religious superstitions from the mind of women. Her quest for truth and liberty was triggered by her early spiritual turmoils, as confirmed in "The Degraded Status of Woman in the Bible," her 1896 pamphlet (Gaylor 2012, p. 124) published by the office of the *Free Thought Magazine*. She then added that she wanted to base women's faith "on science and reason" in which she herself found at least the "peace and comfort" she "could never find in the Bible and the Church." Her reliance on reason was in keeping, in the late nineteenth century, with some social scientific theories originating in August Comte's positivism. She adhered to it until her very last years as evinced in the last article she wrote for the *New York American Journal* (October 1902) before her death. It acted as an answer to Bishop Stevens, and urged people to "embrace truth as it is revealed today by human reason" (Gaylor 2012, p. 111). She had found the antidote to what had terrified her as a young girl and celebrated the "freedom and blessedness of a more rational religion" (Gaylor 2012, p. 153). She then clearly embraced Thomas Paine's irreverent concept of a religion of humanity. In an article summing up the free-thought of her later years, she rejoiced in "The Pleasures of Age," and it seems that she then enjoyed a kind of "carpe diem" mood, trying (in her own words) to "make the most of the present" (Gaylor 2012, pp. 110–111).

As Sarah Grimké and Lucretia Mott, her "mentor," had insisted, Stanton knew for sure there was a clear difference between religion and theology, the former representing a natural experience, and the latter a system of speculations about the unknowable. She also knew that even if the word "religion" itself etymologically refers to something that binds, holding together the people who shared the same beliefs, it also kept them apart from influence. This is exactly what she experienced when she was faced with so many oppositions. Trying to be as "word-conscious" as she was, one may wonder whether Stanton deserved to be listed as a "Feminist Atheist" as noted above. She was involved in an endless quest for truth (instead of authority) without ever explicitly tackling the "problem" of the existence of God. Never maintaining that God does not exist, nor suggesting that "he" may be non-existent, she in her own way investigated all the alternative religions, as brilliantly shown by Kern (2002, p. 213). Her outmost objective, and her nearest approach to what may act as a divinity, may be found in her above-mentioned

May 1881 speech (Gordon 2013, IV:72) to the Free Religious Association in Boston, when she contended that “what we call God is the infinite ideal of humanity” and exclaimed: “let us proclaim the eternity and equality of sex in the Godhead.” She then reached the conclusion that the “the divine type is the communion of masculine and feminine attributes then complete, infinite, without limitation” (Gordon 2013, IV:83). Such subtle assertions cannot, in any case, be called Positive Atheism. Their spiritual overtones can’t be denied, and they seem to harbor her ultimate religion in a nutshell, the ultimate goal of her lifelong search, the fidelity of the “infidel.”

References

- Banner, L. (1980) *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: A Radical for Women's Rights*. Boston: Little & Brown.
- Dubois, E. (ed.) (1981/1992). *The Elizabeth Cady Stanton–Susan B. Anthony Reader*. New York: Schocken Books; Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Fitzgerald, M. (1985) “*Religion and Feminism in Elizabeth Cady Stanton's Life and Thought*.” MA thesis, University of Wisconsin, Madison.
- Fitzgerald, M. (1993) “Foreword,” in Stanton, E. *The Woman's Bible*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, pp. vii–xxxiv.
- Gaylor, A. (2012) *Women without Superstition: Writings of Woman Free Thinkers of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, 2nd edn. Madison, WI: Freedom from Religion Foundation.
- Ginzberg, L. (2009) *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: An American Life*. New York: Farrer, Strauss & Giroux.
- Gordon, A. (ed.) (2003) *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton & Susan B. Anthony*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Gornick, V. (2005) *The Solitude of Self: Thinking about Elizabeth Cady Stanton*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- Kern, K. (2002) *Mrs. Stanton's Bible*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Stanton, E. (1889) *A History of Women's Suffrage*, Vol. 1. Rochester: Fowler & Wells.
- Stanton, E. (1993a) *Eighty Years and More: Reminiscences 1895–1897*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press. Original work published 1898.
- Stanton, E. (1993b). *The Woman's Bible*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press. Original work published 1895 (Vol. I) and 1898 (Vol. II).
- Stanton, E. (2007) *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Feminist as Thinker*, ed. E. DuBois and C. Smith. New York: New York University Press.
- Stanton T., and Stanton B. (eds.) (1922). *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary, and Reminiscences*. New York: Harper.

6

Russell

CAROLYN SWANSON

I think all the great religions of the world – Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and Communism – both untrue and harmful

(Russell 1957a, p. v).

This quote, from the preface of *Why I Am Not a Christian* (1957), curtly conveys Bertrand Russell's contempt of organized religion. The reasons for his disillusionment are explained in several of his works written from the 1920s on. Religion, he thought, was full of superstitious claims that were woefully lacking in justification. However, far from being a source of harmless fiction, religion was a dangerous and oppressive social force. Like the tweed-clad granny in a casino, religion lowered our defenses with her wholesome demeanor and sense of righteousness before we could realize what a cunning card shark she could be. Christianity, he noted, had a vile history of persecution, and still fostered subtler prejudices into the present day. Almost all religions encouraged an anti-intellectual mindset basing beliefs on faith and not justification. They also allowed people to indulge in comforting myths (of an afterlife and a caring deity), instead of facing life's harsh realities. And moreover, and perhaps insidiously, religion had established itself as a moral authority, spouting unwarranted taboos that increased human misery.

It would be easy to see Russell as a great infidel – an earlier version of Christopher Hitchens – who viewed spirituality in the same vein as a cancerous growth. But Russell's relationship with religion was complex and multifarious. He certainly had a strong contempt for organized religion, its accompanying dogma, and its oppression of dissenters. However, for Russell, not all was bad in religious sentiment. His writings pre-1920 convey admiration toward a religious or spiritual attitude: a seriousness about life, a concern and respect for humankind, and a yearning for universal good. Even later in life, after slamming organized faith, Russell reiterated his earlier praise for religious sentiment (Russell 1963, p. 726). After his death, his own daughter described his temperament as “profoundly religious” (Tait 1975, p. 184) – an observation further echoed in academic circles. But Russell's “religious temperament” was stripped clean of dogma

and supernatural belief, and based strictly on attitude and sentiment – the stately sense of awe, reverence, and profundity that wooden pews and high-ceilinged churches tended to bring out.

Russell's "religious side" makes him something of an anomaly among religious critics. He wasn't on a crusade to stamp out all religious sentiment, and in fact, he held onto something of deep value in it. But moreover, he stood out in reaching beyond the ivory towers and speaking to ordinary people against religion, at a time when it wasn't safe to do so. A tremendously prolific writer, he produced multitudes of works on religion in the form of books, articles, and pamphlets. His work appeared in such mainstream publications as *Look Magazine*, *Cowles Magazine*, *New York Times Magazine*, *Hibbert Journal* (a liberal Christian periodical), *Dagens Nyheter* (a major Swedish newspaper), and the *Little Blue Books* (a popular series of staple-bound booklets). He gave several public lectures, including his famous "Why I Am Not a Christian" of 1927, which readily became available in print. He was also no stranger to the British Broadcasting Corporation, where he delivered several radio presentations, including the 1948 debate with Frederick Copleston over the existence of God. Russell received thousands of letters from members of the public, many on religious themes, to which he generously took the time to reply. This was no small feat, since, in later life, he was receiving about 100 letters a day (Russell 1969, p. xviii). In a sense, Russell became a free-thinking champion of the people, but his acclaim as religious critic didn't stop there.

Russell was also a crusader in questioning the *moral* domain of Western religion, and not just the historical accuracy of the scriptures. No doubt the Church espoused worthy morals, but, he argued, it was no final authority on ethics. It had still made some strange pronouncements – as to what was and wasn't an obligation – which often ran counter to general happiness. Not all was of virtue in "Christian virtue," and Russell stood out in his drive to expose this in the early days of the twentieth century.

Russell's Religious Background

For most of his life, Russell was an atheist. He often described himself as "agnostic" which sounds as though he were merely pondering God's existence, wavering on the issue and preparing to plead ignorance. However, this was not actually the case. As he explained, he had as much reason to believe in the God of Christianity as he did in the gods of ancient Greece (Russell 1961a, p. 577; 1969, p. 6). Either belief, he thought, was equally implausible and unsubstantiated. However, he couldn't *conclusively disprove* God's existence (or, for that matter, Zeus's or Poseidon's or Hera's either). So, in a strict sense of knowledge demanding greater certainty, he was agnostic about God's existence. But in a relaxed, vernacular sense of knowledge, he was an atheist – an atheist, as he described himself, for all practical purposes (Russell 1969, p. 6).

Russell lived a long life (nearly 98 years) from 1872 to 1970, attacking religion more openly in his later years, from the 1920s on. His passion for debunking organized faith may seem curious, given that he lived, primarily, in an age of religious retreat, after science had rendered many biblical tenets implausible. However, strangely, science had an opposite effect as well, with theists counting new findings in their favor.

For example, the increasing complexity found in nature gave theists more fodder for an intelligent designer. The progression in evolution, from simple organisms to grand human beings, suggested, to some, a divine plan or orchestration. And throughout Russell's life, there were certain periods of religious revival: at the end of World War I, during the mid-1930s, and during the mid-1940s. This, perhaps, prompted him to crusade against religion in the 1920s and beyond, trying to keep the maimed beast at bay before it had a chance to fully recover.

Russell himself grew up in a strict religious household, primarily under the care of his grandmother, a Scottish Presbyterian later turned Unitarian. His grandmother didn't take the bible literally, and certainly accepted scientific theories such as evolution through natural selection. Nonetheless, she held a strong belief in God, immortal souls, and traditional Christian virtue. Her beliefs had a strong influence on Russell in his formative years, but as he grew up, he found he could no longer accept propositions based on faith. His skeptical side needed solid justification for them and, as a young teen, he started scrutinizing religious doctrines, contemplating them for hours on end. Young Russell didn't feel at liberty to tell anybody about his doubts, with the exception of one agnostic tutor, who was dismissed not long after. Russell worked out his skeptic ideas in a secret notebook that he wrote in English, but cleverly encoded in Greek letters. He aptly entitled the book, "Greek Exercises." To the casual observer, it was a schoolboy's homework in perfecting the letters of a foreign alphabet. But to the astute person, it contained the thoughts of a troubled youth gradually losing his faith: first in free will, then in an immortal soul, and finally in God. Although initially distraught by his doubts in religion, Russell found relief in finally reaching some conclusions.

At 18, Russell ventured off to Cambridge University, where he studied mathematics and later philosophy, and learned whole new systems of thought. Allured by Hegel's idealism, he initially abandoned the conclusions he had previously worked out in "Greek Exercises." However, he eventually dismissed Hegel's philosophy as "a farrago of confusions" (Russell 1956a, p. 17) and reverted back to his views on atheism and mortality that his private meditations had led him to before.

Russell went on to become a writer, founder of an experimental school, peace campaigner, and lecturer/fellow, mostly at Trinity College, Cambridge, but also at institutions in the United States and China. As a writer, he was highly prolific, and wrote for varied audiences, both academic and popular, on a broad range of topics such as logic, mathematics, politics, education, and, of course, religion. Many of his works on religion were first written as speeches, pamphlets, or articles and later collected and compiled into books, such as *Why I Am Not a Christian* (Russell 1957) or *Russell on Religion* (1999b).

The subject of religion particularly hit home for Russell. Throughout his life, he felt the first-hand effects of religious oppression, starting as a young child. By the time he was 4, in 1876, both his parents had died. His father had appointed two atheists as guardians for young Russell and his brother. However, the boys' grandparents legally overturned the will, gaining custody of both children. Their success was partly due to their religious faith and their plan to educate the boys in it. By will, the adult Russell later lamented, parents could have their children raised in any superstition they liked, except none at all (Russell 1947, p. 8; 1949a, p. 3).

In 1910, Russell's life was again altered by religious discrimination when he wished to stand for parliament as a Liberal. Members of the Liberal Association were initially

enthusiastic, recommending him to the Bedford constituency. However, they passed him over for another candidate on hearing he was openly agnostic and unwilling to attend church.

In 1940, Russell lost out on a teaching position at the College of the City of New York – mostly due to his freer views on sex. However, his atheism helped draw the attention of critics in the first place. Episcopalians and Catholics alike sounded alarm bells over his appointment to the college, and a Brooklyn mother brought a legal suit against the city of New York, wanting his contract revoked. Sadly, the judge, a Roman Catholic, ruled in her favor, citing unfounded concerns about Russell’s “immoral character” and “salacious teachings” that would, allegedly, incite students to commit crime (Edwards 1957, pp. 228–239).

No doubt, Russell felt the weight of religious oppression. An unhappy childhood and the sting of lost opportunities may have moved him to speak out on the harms of organized faith. But discrimination was only one of his concerns about religion. He was equally disturbed by its apparent lack of veracity when so many of its doctrines contradicted science or simply couldn’t be justified. He valued loyalty to the truth, however unpleasant the facts might be, and he saw religion as a social roadblock to that goal.

Religion as Untrue

Throughout his life, Russell promoted a rational mindset whereby we form or assess beliefs by weighing the relevant evidence. While not foolproof, he felt this was our best bet for getting things right. However, he saw religion as antithetical to such an outlook, as it founded beliefs on faith, not justification, and resisted counter-evidence to its tenets. Moreover, religion prompted great confidence in spiritual beliefs where the evidence did not warrant it. As Russell noted, culture and socialization were the main factors determining a person’s choice of faith. Thus, people weren’t weighing evidence or reasons and choosing their religious beliefs accordingly. Rather, they were submitting to what they grew up with and were submersed in. However, this hardly seemed like a reliable means of finding truth.

Russell’s comments on rational inquiry were worthy and astute, but his attack on religion may have been over-zealous. By his own admission, many theists had accommodated scientific evidence, rejecting a fully literal interpretation of the bible where the world began in 4004 BC and all humans descended from Adam and Eve (Russell 1997, pp. 16–17). This shows, then, some theistic apportioning of belief to evidence. Still, certain notions have held strong in the Judeo-Christian world, most notably that of an eternal soul and a supreme moral deity. Furthermore, most theists have clung to their faith as a reliable source on morality. Russell took it upon himself to discredit even those fundamental notions as unbacked and improbable, and yet, they went to the heart of Western religion.

The Eternal Soul and God Almighty

To start with, Russell doubted that an eternal soul survived death to go on to heaven or hell. As he boiled it down, a “soul,” or the mental continuity of a person, consisted of memories and habits of personality. But these mental phenomena relied on brain activities,

as evidenced by the strong correlation between them. For example, with damage or alteration to the brain, came effects to a person's memory and personality. Likewise, diseases and drugs that affected the brain also impacted the mental life of a person. Thoughts themselves depended on organizational tracks in the brain. And they appeared to be chemically based, which explained, say, the dulling effects of an iodine deficiency.

Empirical evidence, then, suggested the "soul" was integrally connected to a physical brain with its material processes. Thus, for Russell, the soul would not likely lose that connection, functioning in a radically different way, upon death. Rather, the notion of eternal consciousness seemed like a classic case of wishful thinking. Religion was placating a natural dread of death by offering a comforting fiction in immortality.

However, Russell did not stop at the notion of eternal souls. He went for the jugular in Western religion – arguing that *God's existence* was also very unlikely – especially an omnipotent and supremely moral God. If a deity truly had such qualities, he argued, there was no way around the problem of evil. God, as creator of nature, would have created tapeworms and rabies viruses, among other threatening organisms. Or, if he didn't create them, he certainly didn't prevent their coming into being, making him partly responsible for their harmful effects. But Russell was also astute in anticipating a natural theist response, namely, God's hands were tied; the laws of nature or balancing of ecosystems might require tapeworms, viruses, and other like entities. However, Russell wasn't so easily convinced; God, if truly omnipotent, could have constructed the world (including the laws of nature and the balancing of ecosystems) so that simply wasn't the case.

Russell also rejected another theistic response to the problem of evil – that suffering is God's punishment for sin. In other words, human misery is rightfully *deserved*. As Russell noted, that didn't explain natural disasters, such as erupting volcanoes or large-scale earthquakes; sinners weren't geographically clustered together so a devastating blow or shake targeted only them. It also didn't explain why non-human animals, who weren't morally culpable, were infected by tapeworms more often than humans were. It didn't plausibly explain why some small children, bereft of the opportunity for evil, were suffering from terrible diseases, and it didn't explain why virtuous people sometimes incurred the worst of misfortune and misery. Even the doctrine of original sin would not do – the notion that everyone suffered because Adam and Eve ate forbidden fruit. It didn't explain suffering in the animal world *before* humans (Adam and Eve inclusive) ever existed, for example, the pain caused by an ancient carnivore, such as a T-Rex, in catching its prey.

Believers may find other ways to square off suffering with a supremely moral deity. However, this may be beside the point. Russell, again, thought it unwise to believe a proposition unless it were sufficiently backed, and the burden of proof rested with its proponents. One could equally postulate that a teapot were orbiting in space, but we would not be expected to take that proposition seriously (Russell 1969, p. 6). While hard to disprove, the belief seemed most unlikely in the absence of justification. Russell held a belief in a benevolent God in a similar vein.

The Proofs for God's Existence

The theist may find the teapot illustration disanalogous or unfair, since the notion of God is not entirely baseless. Over the centuries, believers have provided several justifications for a divine being in control of the universe. However, no stranger to the

traditional proofs, Russell critiqued many of them, most famously in his lecture and essay, "Why I Am Not a Christian" (Russell 1961b, pp. 587–591). He also provided counter-arguments in *The Value of Free Thought, Scientific Outlook* (Chapter 5), and *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz* (Chapter 15). He addressed some of the lesser known theistic arguments, that, while perhaps influential in his day, have not stood the test of time and seem too weak or fallacious to bother mentioning here. Of greater interest, Russell tackled the more convincing First Cause Argument and Design Argument. However, the flavor of his responses isn't particularly new, resembling critiques by David Hume or James and John Stuart Mill before him. Nonetheless, Russell infused the counter-responses with his own breadth of insights. And unlike David Hume, who lived in the pre-Darwin era of the eighteenth century, Russell could appeal to natural selection in tackling the Argument from Design.

The First Cause Argument is based on every thing and every being having a cause. Russell, for example, had parents who created him, and they had parents who created them, and so on and so on. This chain of causes may go all the way back through the tides of evolution to the first one-celled organisms, or even to self-replicating RNA or amino acids. But, presumably, the chain of causes cannot go back forever. And thus, God, a first cause, is needed to set the chain of causes in motion. Parallel arguments can be made for other causal chains, ultimately explaining the existence of other organisms or the occurrence of other events. Each of these chains finds its origins in God.

As a young lad, Russell was convinced by this argument for God's existence. However, at 18, he read John Stuart Mill's autobiography where Mill, inspired by his father's inquisitiveness, asked what had caused God. At once, Russell saw that the argument was based on a tenuous premise: that everything was caused. If that premise were true, then something had to have caused God, and the mystery remained of an infinite causal regress. If, however, that premise were false, then the argument collapsed. Not everything had to be caused, and the world, or physical matter of some sort, may just as well be uncaused. Perhaps matter had simply always existed, and we needn't ask for an initial cause. In any case, to infer that God caused the world (through a mysterious magic) was certainly not obvious; it was not supported by any observed causal laws. So, on that score, the theist explanation was no better than the world or matter having no cause at all.

Perhaps a more promising justification for God is the Design Argument, a favorite among believers. It draws on the complexity of organisms – the intricacy of parts and systems working in tandem to achieve some end function. For example, the parts of an eye (cornea, iris, lens, and retina) work together so an organism can see. Similarly, the organs in the digestive system (esophagus, stomach, and intestines) work together to convert food into energy and basic nutrients. It's hard to see how, by happenstance, molecules could be arranged so acutely as to complete specific functions and allow organisms to survive. Rather, the impressive intricacy of living things looks more like the work of a competent and clever engineer. Thus, a grand supernatural creator seems necessary to explain it.

While no doubt the biological world is awe-inspiring, Russell wasn't persuaded by the argument. As he argued, since Darwin's time, evolution through natural selection had explained how organisms change over time, becoming more complex and better suited toward their environment. Thus, the mystery had been solved without a supernatural

designer. Nonetheless, believers were not so easily persuaded. Some, such as ethologist Lloyd Morgan, saw evolution as unfolding according to a plan – one that progressed toward the ultimate end of human beings. A guiding hand was needed in the process to ensure certain features were selected – ones that teamed up with others to perform a useful function, but had no apparent role or benefit on their own. Thus, Darwinism didn't make God superfluous in explaining the complexity of the biological world; he was still needed to set the evolutionary course.

Russell, however, remained unconvinced. He didn't address Morgan's point about irreducibly complex parts/systems (although evolutionists, including Darwin, have offered explanations). But he demonstrated the implausibility of divinely planned evolution. Suffering was part of evolution through natural selection – the weak died off early (before reproducing) and sometimes in unfathomable ways, unable, say, to fight off disease or infection. Thus, if evolution were a divine plan, it was one that included unnecessary harm, and that hardly coincided with a humane deity. Russell also found it odd that an omnipotent being would rely on such a laborious and inefficient process to create humans, when he could have accomplished the task effortlessly and instantaneously. As Russell (1997, p. 80) stated: "Why the Creator should have preferred to reach His goal [of fashioning humans] by a process, instead of going straight to it, these modern theologians do not tell us." Russell further puzzled over the long-range effects of the "plan." Scientists knew that, one day, the sun would burn out and all life on Earth would come to an end. Thus, in nature, there was no overall progression toward the end goal of human life, as that goal would be quashed in the bigger picture. The world was instead "progressing" toward human extinction. Thus, Russell doubted that God was indeed at the helm of evolution.

So, arguments have been put forth for God's existence, most notably the First Cause and Design Arguments. However, Russell didn't find them compelling. Moreover, at best they pointed to a supernatural being who could start causal chains or design complex organisms. But they said nothing of its omnipotence or moral fiber, and thus, they did little to prove the existence of God.

The Moral Domain

Russell, then, maintained that the justification for God, or immortal souls for that matter, was at best inconclusive. However, in a more revolutionary mode, he further rejected the Church's domain over ethics – a last bastion for religion in a world becoming ever less superstitious. That's not to say Russell didn't value any church-endorsed morals. Apparently, he lived by "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil" – which his granny inscribed on a bible she gave him for his twelfth birthday. Nonetheless, Russell didn't think the bible or the Church should be taken as a moral authority whose precepts were adopted without question. First, different religions adopted different and conflicting revered texts: the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Koran. Not all could be right, yet people merely followed the source deemed sacred by their culture. Second, the bible was written long ago, and reflected the ignorant views of an earlier and crueler time. Russell saw several religious taboos and morals as arbitrary or even harmful, going against human happiness.

Russell gave several examples of dubious or damaging moral principles of Western religion. These precepts were alive and well in Russell's day, although the Church has since softened its stance on many of them. One example is the taboo on teaching children about sex. As Russell argued, this could lead some youths to making unwise sexual decisions without knowing how to prevent pregnancies or venereal diseases. The Church had also prohibited birth control, which could contribute to poverty and overpopulation on a global scale. Furthermore, the Church's condemnation of divorce forced strained marriages to continue, which seemed particularly cruel when a partner was mean, insane, syphilitic, or chronically drunk. Moreover, the Church's restrictions on sex were, according to Russell, unwarranted and oppressive, and they sometimes gave people the wrong motive to marry in the first place.

Again, Russell questioned these tenets, among others, given their detriment to overall happiness. But he criticized religion not only for what it shunned, but also for what it permitted. Sometimes, religion turned a blind eye to what was genuinely cruel. Although it placed several limitations on sex, mutual consent was not among them. A husband could justifiably rape his wife, as per the "rules" of Western religion, so long as he wanted more children. In addition, the Church denied human responsibility toward non-human animals. Pope refused Pius IX to support the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), Russell lamented, as the Church saw no sin in harming creatures without soul (Russell 1943, p. 8).

Russell found many religious morals to be based in mere superstition. And in general, he saw an odd individualism in religious morality, where actively helping others took a back-seat to purifying the self. The message of Western religion boiled down to avoiding sin and obeying God, however that was interpreted: observing Lent, eating Kosher, avoiding alcohol, paying penance, confining sex to marriage. Religious virtue was steeped in personal holiness and salvation, but gave a mere passing nod to social responsibility. Russell urged that a morality of initiative was needed, where "virtue" was focused more on helping others and making the world a better place.

Religion as Harmful

Russell's concerns about religion went beyond the veracity of its tenets, be they theological or moral. He also criticized religion for being oppressive, as well as untrue. According to Russell, religion was a powerful and dangerous social force that had done "more harm than good" (Russell 1963, p. 726). In its extremist forms, he noted, religion had a dark history of persecution and cruelty, including the tortures of the Inquisition and the burnings of witches and heretics. He also pointed the finger at Christianity for *opposing* moral progress: improving criminal law, ending slavery, bettering the treatment of blacks. And he scorned religion for hindering science and medicine, for example, by resisting "nonreligious" findings or by impeding research. While no doubt these are powerful examples, Russell's critics have accused him of cherry-picking historical acts to prove his points – demeaning religion on the worst of its sins without asking if they characterized contemporary religion more broadly. As Edgar Sheffield Brightman argued, the science of medicine also had a tarnished past, with physicians fighting against antiseptic discoveries or socialized health care; however, that wouldn't be

grounds to knock medical science in general (1963, p. 544). As Marvin Kohl observed, Russell was being oddly essentialist, treating the essence of religion as static and immutable, and fixed by the dark deeds of earlier times (1987, pp. 75–76).

These critics raised worthy points. After 1920, Russell does seem to paint religion with a broad and bleakly colored brush, and without a fair weighing of its harms and benefits. The benefits are certainly downplayed; for example, he pays little heed to religious charity, such as Salvation Army shelters and meal programs that have helped many out of dire situations. Religion's dark history may also have been a product of earlier and crueler times, but values have changed and progressed, as have church institutions. Arguably, then, Russell did tend to overstate his case. Nonetheless, he wasn't all about recounting the religious atrocities of yonder days. He also pointed to subtler, contemporary harms that have come out of religion, even in its more tempered versions. Whether his mantra of "more harm than good" was right or wrong, he did legitimately point to the often-masked dangers of organized faith. And he wisely waved a precautionary note against blindly trusting these institutions.

Characteristic to most religions, Russell noted, was a prompting to accept doctrine *on faith*, without proof or evidence and sometimes in the face of contrary evidence. Religion sends out the message that this is virtuous and admirable, as it shows real commitment and strength of conviction. However, this anti-evidential mode of thinking ran contrary to rational methods of discovering truth. Russell feared it would stunt the intellect and spill over to other domains of inquiry. Moreover, he thought it dangerously allowed people to relish in their prejudices given they were not constrained by what the facts dictated, and this tended to make them hostile toward opposition in viewpoint.

Apart from its anti-intellectual promptings, Western religion fostered shameful character traits – arrogance as a starter. As Russell observed, people naturally wanted to feel their lives had significance, and religion catered to that arrogance by inflating the sense of human importance. God allegedly took a particular interest in people, making them in his image and rewarding and punishing their behavior. And God fashioned everything for human convenience: the sun to light the day, the moon to light the night, and the fruits to offer sustenance. Religion thus made people feel they had some special place in the cosmos. But it did more than cater to unwarranted arrogance; it also fed into a more contemptible trait: cowardice, or the inability to face one's fears. As Russell observed, people were naturally afraid of death, but religion absolved that fear by promising a glorious afterlife in heaven. People were also afraid of being alone and feeling vulnerable, but religion gave them constant guardianship in the name of a heavenly father. Finally, people feared helplessness against the uncontrollable in nature. But religion gave them a sense of hope and empowerment: through prayer, they could potentially move God to do the humanly impossible.

In many ways, then, religion had spun a magical fairytale that catered to the natural faults of egoism and fearfulness. However, in doing so, Russell urged, it dignified these traits instead of discouraging them. At the very least, it provided an "acceptable" channel for indulging in them, and one that often required self-deception. People were turning to myths about heaven, hell and God Almighty that, at the same time, they knew were false on some level – which is why, say, they continued to fear death despite the paradise-appeal of heaven. Russell found this self-deception borderline contemptible – a feeble and foolhardy way to avoid facing reality. Yet religion, almost maternally, nudged it along.

Apart from affecting character, religion often bred discrimination, at least subtler forms of it. As Russell noted, many religions, particularly the more dogmatic ones, urged blind conviction in their doctrines and consequent intolerance for persons rejecting them. This made religions particularly suspect of atheists, who often went for a wholesale denial of supernatural beliefs. Russell, we saw, indirectly faced the winds of religious persecution, losing out on an opportunity to become a member of parliament and to teach at the College of the City of New York. And such experiences, he thought, were not uncommon to avowed atheists. To be sure, the religious climate has become more tolerant in Britain and America since these incidents occurred in the early twentieth century. However, even in the new millennium, religious bias still persists. As per recent surveys, about half of Americans mistrust atheists; 48% would *not* want their child to marry an atheist (Edgell, Gerteis, and Hartmann 2006, p. 218), and 53% would *not* vote for a “generally well-qualified” presidential candidate who didn’t believe in God (Jones 2007, p. 2). And even into the present day, the organization Boy Scouts of America prohibits atheists and agnostics from becoming scouts or scout leaders.

So, in contemporary society, religions still seem to invoke certain harms, even if they no longer burn witches and heretics. As Russell observed, they tend to promote dogmatism, dignify cowardice and arrogance, encourage self-deception, and fuel prejudice against dissenters. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, they often misrepresent themselves as moral authorities while advocating certain taboos that are contrary to general happiness.

A Religious Atheist?

As seen, Russell spared no mercy when attacking organized faith – as being “both untrue and harmful.” In light of his hostility, his works prior to 1920 seem quite surprising, where he did indeed shine a glowing light on religion. He admired a religious side of our psyche which was supposedly comprised of certain reverential emotions or sentiments. This mostly comes out in *Principles of Social Reconstruction* of 1916 (*Principles*), a print version of one of Russell’s lecture series, and in “of Religion” (“Essence”) of 1912, an article originally published in the *Hibbert Journal*. In “Essence” (Russell, 1999a), he explicitly advocated for a religion without dogma – one comprised strictly of religious feelings or attitudes.

In both “Essence” and *Principles*, Russell tied religious sentiment to our “infinite” or “spiritual” side. This was the serious, impartial side of our psyche (or “soul”), steeped in a sense of reverence and obligation toward humankind. It suppressed our self-interests and instinctual desires in favor of a universal good. Moreover, it went beyond the petty, mundane cares of everyday life and reached for something grander and nobler.

In “Essence,” Russell praised particular sentiments he found in Christianity. First, there was a sense of acquiescence or acceptance that what happens is for the best. Such acceptance, Russell thought, could free us from anger, indignation, and regret over the tough blows we experienced in life. Second, there was universal love or a caring concern for everyone, which could ameliorate some of the loneliness in the world and loosen the divide we otherwise made between different people. And last, there was worship or deep appreciation, which he saw as noble in some way, especially when

directed at the ideal good. These “religious” feelings were valuable to Russell, only divorced from God or superstitious dogma.

After 1920, Russell let the dogs loose on religion. He seldom spoke again of the religious emotions he admired in his earlier works. Instead, he pointed to negative emotions, mostly fear and conceit, as the main drivers behind religion. And he divorced religion, apparently, from the values of selflessness and universal good. Instead, he saw religious values as individualistic – focused on purifying the self and *not* on improving human welfare. Finally, he seemed to toss out his 1912 notion of a religion without dogma. In 1921, in “Essence,” he partly *defined* religions as “beliefs with many dogmas” (Russell 1999a, p. 74)). And in that same work he defiantly wrote: “[I]s there something essential to religion which can be preserved after all the harmful dogmas are eliminated? I think not” (p. 74).

The contrast leaves readers curious as to what happened. According to Nicholas Griffin (1995, p. 55), “Essence” was influenced by Russell’s love for Ottoline Morrell. It was Russell’s attempt to accommodate her faith and find some common ground with her spiritually. He could do that by praising religious feelings, which didn’t commit him to any superstitious belief. But, away from her, he took a harder line as to what feelings truly after motivated and inspired religion, and he came to doubt that religion had much to do with the noble sentiments he had earlier recommended.

Stefan Andersson and Louis Greenspan (Russell 1999a, p. 52) also thought Morrell influenced “Essence.” But contra Griffin, they didn’t think Russell gave up on his earlier esteem of religious sentiment (pp. 2–3). In 1944, several years after Morrell’s death and after his most damning attacks on religion, Russell reaffirmed his religious admiration, stating: “I consider some form of personal religion highly desirable, and feel many people unsatisfactory through the lack of it” (Russell 1963, p. 726). A decade later, Russell (1956b, p. 238) expressed great value in the “sublimity of feeling” shown through religion. After his death, his daughter described him as “by temperament, a profoundly religious man” (Tait 1975, p. 184). These comments suggest Russell retained value in religious sentiment that went beyond his love affair with Lady Morrell. However, the incongruities in Russell’s writings still cry out for an explanation.

Unfortunately, Russell seemed to use “religion” in different senses – sometimes referring to traditional denominations (such as Christianity or Judaism), and sometimes to certain admirable emotions that oddly, he didn’t find characteristic of traditional denominations. So why he considered these emotions “religious” is a bit puzzling, especially when he deemed them separable from belief in God or spiritual dogma. But Russell, we need to realize, found most denominations two-faced. Christianity, for example, promoted universal love, and yet had a long history of persecuting non-believers. Christ embodied humanitarianism, but believed in eternal punishment (Russell 1961b, p. 593). Religion taught neighborly warmth and love, but prompted condemnation – by imposing silly taboos (against sex and divorce) for judging others’ actions. Russell (1957b, p.66) surmised, in a more cynical mode, that church leaders valued “morals” as “a legitimate outlet for their desire to inflict pain.” Russell, then, made a divide between the religious guise (what religion touted itself to be) and the religious reality (what it actually was). He admired certain sentiments – selflessness and humanity – that were part of the religious guise or mantra. However, he didn’t think they bore out much in religious reality. They didn’t reflect the general values of most ministries or churchgoers, save a few genuine adherents. Unfortunately, Russell’s

discussions of “religious” emotion seemed to oscillate between the guise and the reality. So, the incongruities in his works are perhaps best explained by which religious “face” he happened to focus on.

Another possibility also presents itself. Russell’s daughter, Katharine Tait (1975, p. 183), thought Christianity had shaped certain emotional patterns in her father. His grandmother raised him to believe that life was a moral testing ground for the after-life, where a ticket to the pearly gates required considerable fortitude. Russell, of course, came to reject the notion of immortality and heaven or hell. But he retained the pattern of directing his efforts toward creating a better future, even at the cost of enjoying the here and now. And his goal of a better future was not just for himself, but for *all humanity* – a concern that religion at least purported to have. While Russell rejected the scripture and dogma, he continued to value the sentiments and habits which religion first impressed on him – that of sacrificing self-interests for the future welfare of society. But, while worthy and humanitarian, there was nothing inherently religious about these attitudes. Nonetheless, perhaps psychologically, Russell had troubles disassociating them from religion. Arguably, he achieved some disassociation post-1920, where his writings are the least flattering about religious emotions and motivations. However, even late in life, he still described moments when the Christian outlook affected his feelings (Tait 1975, p. 187), and also late in life, there were snippets of religious praise in his writings.¹ Arguably, then, Russell struggled with his concept of “religion” and whether certain humanitarian emotions or attitudes were part of it, perhaps accounting for his altering esteem for religion. Nevertheless, he didn’t dispute the value of these altruistic emotions or attitudes, which he consistently held in high regard.

Whether we want to call Russell “a religious atheist” depends on how we construe “religion” and whether it boils down to serious or humanitarian sentiments. But no doubt Russell genuinely had those sentiments. Throughout his life, he was a peace campaigner and social activist, promoting human welfare. Quite generously, he also replied to thousands of letters from ordinary people who sought enlightenment, consolation, or personal advice. And he was, in his daughter’s words, a “passionate moralist” who aimed at improving the lot of humankind (Tait 1975, pp. 183–184). He was an example of someone living a life steeped in humanity and profundity – the goals that religion touted, even if it failed to deliver. Russell showed the world, in word and in deed, that theism wasn’t necessary for being serious about life or concerned about the human condition. And in fact, there was something noble and dignified in using reason, and not faith, in making sense of life.²

Notes

- 1 For example, in “Reply to Criticisms,” he admired a personal religion (Russell 1963, p. 726), and in “The Unity of Western Culture,” he credited Christianity with seeing persons as intrinsically valuable (Russell 1949b, p. 7). In “Man’s Peril”, he admired a “sublimity of feeling” shown through religion (Russell, 1949b, p.7).
- 2 For more about Russell and his views on religion, see: Grayling (1996), Griffin (1995) and Russell (1957; 1969; 1972, 1999b).

References

- Brightman, E. S. (1963) "Russell's philosophy of religion," in P. Schilpp (ed.) *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell*, Vol. 2, 3rd edn. New York: Harper & Row, pp. 537–556. Original work published 1944.
- Edgell, P., Gerteis, J. and Hartmann, D. (2006). "Atheists as 'Other': Moral Boundaries and Cultural Membership in American Society." *American Sociological Review* 71: 211–234.
- Edwards, P. (1957) "Appendix," in P. Edwards (ed.) *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*. New York: Simon & Schuster, pp. 207–259.
- Grayling, A. (1996) *Russell*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Griffin, N. (1995) "Bertrand Russell as a critic of religion." *Studies in Religion* 24: 47–58.
- Jones, J. (2007) "Some Americans Reluctant to Vote for Mormon, 72-year-old Presidential Candidates." *Gallup News Service*, 20 Feb. 2007, at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/26611/some-americans-reluctant-vote-mormon-72yearold-presidential-candidates.aspx> (accessed 7 Sept. 2018).
- Kohl, M. (1987) "Russell on the utility of religion: Copleston's critique." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 22: 69–79.
- Russell, B. (1916) *Principles of Social Reconstruction*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Russell, B. (1943) *An Outline of Intellectual Rubbish: A Hilarious Catalogue of Organized and Individual Stupidity*. Girard, KS: Haldeman-Julius.
- Russell, B. (1947) *Can Man Be Rational?* Girard, KS: Haldeman-Julius. Original work published 1928.
- Russell, B. (1949a) *Am I an Atheist or an Agnostic?: A Plea for Tolerance in the Face of New Dogmas*. Girard, KS: Haldeman-Julius.
- Russell, B. (1949b) "Unity of Western Culture." *World Review* 2: 5–8.
- Russell, B. (1956a) "Why I took to philosophy," in B. Russell (ed.) *Portraits from Memory and Other Essays*. New York: Simon & Schuster, pp. 13–18.
- Russell, B. (1956b) "Man's Peril," in B. Russell (ed.) *Portraits from Memory and Other Essays*. New York: Simon & Schuster, pp. 233–38.
- Russell, B. (1957a) "Preface," in P. Edwards (ed.) *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*. New York: Simon & Schuster, pp. v–vii.
- Russell, B. (1957b) "What I Believe," in P. Edwards (ed.), *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*. New York: Simon & Schuster, pp. 48–87. Original work published 1925.
- Russell, B. (1961a) "What is an Agnostic?" in R. Egner and L. Denonn (eds.) *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell 1903–1959*. New York: Simon & Schuster, pp. 577–584. Original work published 1953.
- Russell, B. (1961b) "Why I am not a Christian," in R. Egner and L. Denonn (eds.) *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell 1903–1959*. New York: Simon & Schuster, pp. 585–597. Original work published 1927.
- Russell, B. (1963) "Reply to criticisms," in P. Schilpp (ed.) *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell, Volume II*, 3rd edn, New York: Harper & Row, pp. 679–741. Original work published 1944.
- Russell, B. (1969) *Dear Bertrand Russell: A Selection of His Correspondence with the General Public 1950–1968*, ed. B. Feinberg and R. Kasrils, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Russell, B. (1972) *Atheism: Collected Essays, 1943–1949*, ed. M. O'Hair. New York: Arno Press/New York Times.
- Russell, B. (1997) *Religion and Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Original work published 1935.
- Russell, B. (1999a) "The essence and effect of religion," in *Russell on Religion*, ed. S. Andersson and L. Greenspan. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 70–76.
- Russell, B. (1999b) *Russell on Religion*, ed. S. Andersson and L. Greenspan. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Tait, K. (1975) *My Father Bertrand Russell*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Part II

Philosophical Movements

Empiricism

GREGORY W. DAWES

What is Empiricism?

“Names of philosophical positions,” wrote W. V. O. Quine (1908–2000), “are a necessary evil” (1995, p. 251). They may be necessary, but they are certainly an evil. This is particularly the case when it comes to the position known as “empiricism.” Among historians, for instance, the traditional distinction between “empiricists” and “rationalists” has fallen out of favor, on the grounds that there are few thinkers who can be neatly assigned to either category (Norton 1981; Loeb 1981, pp. 25–75). But historians who reject these terms often replace them with others (see, for instance, Anstey 2005). So the best we can do is to minimize the harm such categories cause. One way of doing this is to carefully distinguish the views that have been clustered under this heading. A useful place to begin is with a distinction we find in the work of Ernst Gellner which has been revived more recently by Bas van Fraassen: that between a *descriptive* and a *prescriptive* empiricism. I shall describe these two as *empiricism as a doctrine* and *empiricism as a stance*.

Empiricism as a Doctrine

The conviction at the heart of empiricism as a doctrine is that all factual knowledge is derived, directly or indirectly, from sense perception. The traditional empiricist slogan has long been the Latin phrase *nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu* (nothing is in the intellect which was not first in the senses). While best known as a description of views of John Locke (1632–1704) offered by G. W. Leibniz (1646–1716), it is also found in a number of medieval authors, who commonly attribute it to Aristotle (Crane 1970, pp. 78–9).

Implications

What follows from the idea that all factual knowledge is drawn from the senses? Three implications are worth highlighting, since they give rise to three different forms of empiricism. The first has to do with the validity of inferences from *observable facts* to *unseen causes*. This was the issue addressed by the first people to call themselves “empiricists” (*empeirikoi*): a group of Hellenistic medical writers who set themselves in opposition to those whom they called “rationalists” (*logikoi*) or “dogmatists” (*dogmatikoi*). Claiming to rely only on experience (*empeiria*), the ancient medical empiricists allowed no inference other than that between one observable fact and another (Galen of Pergamon 1985, p. 9). They allowed, for instance, for a reasoning based on observations of the effects of a particular treatment, but would not permit inferences from observable symptoms to unobservable inner states of the body. The “constructive empiricism” of Bas van Fraassen is a modern version of this view: it shares with the ancient empiricists a rejection of inferences to unobservable entities.

A second implication of the basic empiricist doctrine is the rejection of a belief in *innate ideas*. Empiricists generally hold not only that all factual knowledge but that all the concepts we use to understand the world are drawn from experience. The *locus classicus* for an empiricism of this kind is the work of John Locke, who famously suggested in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (2.1.2) that the mind is originally “white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas” (1997, p. 109). More recent empiricists are likely to be more cautious than was Locke, for experimental psychology has lent some support to the “nativist” view that the mind is not a *tabula rasa*. They might allow that we have *predispositions* to form certain concepts, while insisting that those predispositions require experience to be activated.

A third form of empiricism rejects the idea that we have a power of *intellectual intuition* that enables access to factual knowledge independently of experience. Empiricists who hold this view, such as David Hume (1711–1776), may accept that we have a power of intellectual intuition when it comes to the relations among our concepts. We can know, for instance, that our idea of a God (a being “greater than which cannot be thought”) includes that of omniscience (Markie 2015, 2). But empiricists would deny that we have a purely intellectual insight into any factual matters. The truths of mathematics and logic offer a particular problem for a strict empiricism of this kind. But empiricists can argue that these propositions are either true by definition, by virtue of some kind of convention, or justified, pragmatically, on the basis that they play a vital role within theories that are themselves justified empirically.

Two Qualifications

These three forms of empiricism as a doctrine may seem clear enough, but they require two qualifications. The first is that none of these forms of empiricism need be a *global* doctrine (Markie 2015, 1.2). One could, for instance, be an empiricist when it comes to the physical sciences, while also holding that there are other kinds of factual truths, such as those of ethics, which we know by intuition. Caution is required if an empiricist is to go down this path. Take, for instance, the idea that the truths of logic and mathematics are known intuitively. This may seem harmless, but if logical and mathematical truths are thought of as independent of human thought and activity, empiricism quickly comes under threat. Given the role played by mathematics in the modern

sciences, it would be hard to maintain that scientific knowledge is derived *entirely* from sense perception. One can end up with a view of scientific knowledge which resembles that of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), in which the input of the senses is processed by way of principles that are known *a priori*.

A second qualification has to do with the idea of *experience*. By “experience” empiricists mean sense-perceptual experience, but they differ regarding the kind of input the senses provide. Direct realists about perception hold that the senses put us immediately in touch with the world, making objects manifest to us. But empiricists have frequently held that what they call the “external” world is known to us only through a “veil of perception.” What are immediately known, on this view, are merely *sense data*, from which the existence of an external world must be inferred, or internal *representations* of that world, which merely resemble it in various respects. A “sense data” theory of perception can threaten the first form of empiricist doctrine: that which denies the validity of inferences to what cannot be observed. The problem here is that on a sense-data view, even the objects of everyday life – chairs, tables, and coffee cups – are known, not directly, but by way of an inference from what is immediately experienced.

A Historical Note

When discussing empiricism as a doctrine, we should also keep in mind the changes it underwent in the twentieth century. The first change involved a cautious acceptance, among many empiricists, of inferences to unobservable causes. A key figure in this developments was Hans Reichenbach (1891–1953). Setting himself in opposition to the positivists, Reichenbach defended a form of probabilistic inference that can reach beyond what is observed (1961, pp. 114–129). The clearest example of such an inference occurs when scientists have a number of independent observations that converge on a common result. This convergence, it can be argued, would represent an extraordinarily coincidence if it were not produced by a common cause (Salmon 1999, p. 312). Perhaps the clearest example is that of Avogadro’s number – the number of atoms in 12 grams of carbon 12 – which can be arrived at in at least five independent ways, a precise coincidence that would be extraordinary unlikely if there were no atoms (Perrin 1916, pp. 206–207).

A second change in empiricist doctrine is a shift towards a more “holistic” and dynamic understanding of empirical testing. This shift was most clearly expressed in the work of Quine. Beginning with a point made by Pierre Duhem (1861–1916) – that no hypothesis can be tested in isolation, but only in conjunction with auxiliary hypotheses – Quine argued that all our knowledge forms part of a single web of belief. “Statements about the external world,” he writes, “face the tribunal of sense experience not individually but only as a corporate body” (Quine 1951, p. 38). When this body of beliefs is confronted by experience, it is a matter of choice which beliefs we alter in order to ensure consistency with what is observed.

Quine’s views remain contested. But the shift towards a holistic and dynamic view of testability also found support from the history of science. Following in the footsteps of Thomas Kuhn (1922–1996), Imre Lakatos (1922–1974) noted that scientists do not immediately take their hypotheses to be falsified when confronted with counter-examples. Scientific testing is holistic, in the sense that hypotheses are not assessed in isolation, but as part of a “research program.” A research program contains a

“hard core,” which (while the program is successful) is protected from refutation by a “protective belt” of auxiliary hypotheses. Scientific testing is also dynamic insofar as the assessment of a research program occurs over time, by assessing whether it is progressive or degenerating. A progressive program will continually explain new facts or solve new problems within the relevant domain; a degenerating one will be doing no more than defending the explanations it has already offered (Lakatos 1970, pp. 132–177).

Empiricism as a Stance

So much for empiricism as a doctrine. A second way of thinking of empiricism is as a stance. A stance can be thought of as a policy (Teller 2004, p. 166), which is intended to regulate a particular kind of action. What is the action that this stance regulates? It is tempting to say it is the action of forming beliefs. But this would immediately raise the question of belief voluntarism. Can we exercise (direct) control over the formation of our beliefs? Perhaps not. So it may be better to say that the object of this policy is the act of acceptance. Empiricism, on this view, is a set of norms indicating when we should accept a proposition, in the sense of taking it as a premise in our theoretical or practical reasoning (Cohen 1992: 4–5).

What are those norms? Different thinkers may formulate them in different ways. A follower of Karl Popper (1902–1994), for instance, would say we should accept only those propositions that have a high empirical content and that have survived severe testing. Those who prefer Bayesian styles of reasoning might speak of propositions that are rendered probable by empirical data. But it is important to note that norms of this kind are not always formulated. A stance can be implicit in a particular set of practices. A person brought up in a context in which those practices are valued may never have chosen the empirical stance or even reflected on what it entails. She may merely take it for granted.

Empiricist thinkers do not always distinguish the doctrine and the stance. In defending his naturalism, for instance, Quine at one point offers what looks like an empiricist doctrine. He insists that “the most we can reasonably seek in support of an inventory and description of reality is testability of observable consequences” (1995, p. 252). On this view, the limits of our knowledge are set by the methods of the sciences, broadly understood. But Quine elsewhere describes what he calls “relative empiricism” “as the rule that we should not “venture further from sensory evidence” than we need to (Quine 1974, p. 138). This is not a doctrine, but a “maxim,” as Quine calls it. It is a rule of conduct, a particular expression of empiricism as a stance.

Empiricism as stance may embrace a wider range of thinkers than empiricism as doctrine. Take, for instance, those who believe that *a priori* principles, grasped by a purely intellectual intuition, play an essential role in scientific thought. As I noted with regard to logical and mathematical truths, this seems incompatible with empiricism as a doctrine. But those holding such a view could be fallibilists about such intuitions, recognizing that what we thought was a genuine intellectual intuition may turn out to have been mistaken (Bonjour 1998, pp. 110–115). (The idea that space is necessarily structured according to the principles of Euclidean geometry seemed intuitively true, until the revolution in physics brought about by Einstein.) If such thinkers hold that any purported intuition needs to be tested against experience, they seem to be embracing empiricism as a stance.

It may be objected that to think of empiricism as a stance rather than a doctrine is to move from a vague category into an ever vaguer one. In many respects, it is. But to think of empiricism as a stance avoids the difficulties that face empiricism as a doctrine. I have already hinted at two of these: the threat posed by logical and mathematical truths and by sense-data or representational theories of perception. But the most serious threat to empiricism as a doctrine is that it appears to be self-refuting. It represents a factual claim – about the limits of our knowledge – that is not itself drawn from experience. Empiricism as a stance, on the other hand, is not self-refuting, for it makes no factual claims. As a policy rather than a doctrine it is not truth-apt, but is merely more or less conducive to certain ends. This allows for a pragmatic defense. One could argue, for example, that an empiricist policy is the most reliable way of both achieving some level of intersubjective agreement and eliminating false beliefs.

Religious Implications

It is time to turn to the central question of this chapter, namely the relation between empiricism and religious belief.

Empiricism as Doctrine and Stance

What implications does empiricism *as a doctrine* have for religion? The most important feature of empiricism in this context would seem to be the status of inferences to unobservable entities. A liberal version of empiricism that allows for such inferences may seem to be open, in principle, to religious claims. If one accepts the possibility of valid inferences to the existence of entities that cannot be observed, does this not open the way to inferences to the existence of God? Perhaps it does. But if we are naturalists as well as empiricists, in the sense of taking the sciences as our model of knowledge, we will have reason to question this line of argument.

Take, for instance, the “common cause” argument championed by Reichenbach. Could we argue for the existence of God in the same way that physicists argued for the existence of atoms? In order to do so, we would have to find a variety of independently observable phenomena, the precise coincidence of which would be extraordinarily unlikely if there were no God. But even if arguments for the existence of God *can* appeal to a variety of independently observable facts, the observations in question do not seem to be quantifiable. (There is no “mathematical theology” comparable to our mathematical physics.) But if belief in the existence of God does not yield precise predictions, of the kind made possible by quantifiable hypotheses, then it will also fail to yield precise coincidences among those predictions.

Does this matter? After all, not all the sciences are quantifiable. Indeed there are situations in which qualitative research is more appropriate than quantitative. Think, for instance, of the kinds of fieldwork observations made by skilled anthropologists when working with tribal peoples. But in general quantitative claims have many advantages. Insofar as they allow for precise predictions, they have a higher degree of empirical content: there are more states of affairs that would demonstrate their falsity. Quantitative predictions also allow us to choose one hypothesis over another in situations in which

qualitative observations would not. Newtonian physics and general relativity, for example, both offered an explanation of the advance of the perihelion of Mercury. But only general relativity allowed for a precise match between theory and observational data (Hoyningen-Huene (2013:105)).

One might argue that there is at least one theistic hypothesis that *does* make precise predictions, namely the theory of cosmic fine-tuning: the idea that the finely balanced conditions that make life possible are more likely to be the result of design than chance. These conditions can be, and are, spelled out precisely, in terms derived from mathematical physics. Note, however, that (like most theistic arguments) the fine-tuning claim is an instance of *accommodation* rather than *prediction*. We already know the precise values that are thought to be required in order for life to exist; the argument is merely that the existence of God would explain them. By itself, of course, this does not disqualify a hypothesis. Darwin's theory, for instance, was first accepted on the grounds that it could accommodate existing data better than any alternative. But philosophers and scientists commonly regard a successful prediction as better evidence for a theory than the fact that it can accommodate existing data. (For a recent defense of this view, see White 2003, p. 667.)

There is also a difference between positing entities that are unobservable in practice (given our current means of observation) and positing entities that are unobservable in principle. Even those empiricists happy to accept inferences to entities that are at present unobservable may balk at accepting inferences to entities that are unobservable in principle. In the former case – that of entities that are unobservable *in practice* – we may hope to be able, one day, directly to interact with them. Electrons, for example, were originally theoretical entities, posited to explain the behavior of cathode rays (Thomson 1987). But we can now work with them directly, utilizing their causal properties to investigate other matters (Hacking 1984, p. 167). Gods, spirits, and demons, on the other hand, seem to be *in principle* unobservable (unless they choose to make themselves known) and it is difficult to conceive of a situation in which we could directly manipulate them.

What about the stricter form of empiricism, one that rejects any inference to unobservable entities? One would expect an empiricism of this kind to reject any kind of “natural theology,” or at least any kind of natural theology that makes use of explanatory inferences. Few today would embrace the verifiability criterion of meaning characteristic of early-twentieth-century positivism, which would consign claims about supernatural beings to the category of nonsense. But even constructive empiricists who regard such claims as meaningful will deny that they could constitute knowledge.

If such thinkers remain sympathetic to religion, this leaves them a challenging task. They must carve out some space for religious claims other than that created by explanatory reasoning. There are several options here. A first option is to find a deductive argument for God's existence, one that does not involve explanatory inferences. (The ontological argument or some forms of cosmological argument might do the job.) A second option is to embrace a theological non-realism, which denies that religions make factual claims. A third option is to make a distinction between the “objectifying” language of science and the “existential” language of religion. (Van Fraassen 2002, pp. 191–193, seems tempted by this view.) A final option, to which I shall return in a moment, is to insist that religious faith represents a non-natural source of knowledge, which goes beyond what “merely human” reason can attain.

What about *empiricism as a stance*? What implications does this have for religion? This is a more difficult question to answer. I have described empiricism as stance as a policy and policies generally require interpretation. To put this another way, the application of a policy will require an act of judgement and the procedure by which we make this judgement may not be expressible in an algorithm (Teller 2004, p. 167). So should those who adopt empiricism as a stance reject religious claims? Not necessarily, although they will certainly want such claims to be testable against what can be observed. The lower the empirical content of religious claims – the fewer observable states of affairs they exclude – the more an empiricist will regard them with suspicion. Once again, this will mean being skeptical of religious hypothesis that make no precise predictions. It follows that while those who hold to empiricism as a stance may or may not be inclined to atheism, they will almost certainly be inclined towards agnosticism.

Religious Webs of Belief

The discussion so far has assumed that religious propositions are being tested individually and in isolation from one another. Arguments for and against the existence of God, for instance, generally make this assumption. They assess the proposition that there exists an all-powerful, all-knowing, and morally perfect Creator independently of the other beliefs with which it is commonly associated. But as we have seen, recent philosophers take a more sophisticated view of empirical testing, holding that particular claims can be tested only as part of a web of belief or research program. One might argue that analogous considerations should apply to religious beliefs.

There is something to be said for this idea. The problem with assessing religious beliefs in isolation is that they, too, form a web of beliefs, in which individual propositions can enjoy evidential support from the other propositions with which they are associated. The other beliefs with which they are associated can also help protect central beliefs from refutation. Take, for instance, the problem of evil. The existence of what at least appear to be gratuitous evils looks, at first sight, like strong counter-evidence to the claim that there exists an all-powerful, all-knowing, and benevolent God. But if Christians, for instance, also believe in the story of the Fall – the rebellion of Adam and Eve against God, the effects of which were passed on to their descendants – they have an account that helps to explain (or apparently explain) these evils. That account is strengthened if Christians also hold to a libertarian view of human freedom which can lend support to a free will defense.

Similar remarks may be made about the premises of theistic arguments, which can seem more plausible to a theist than an atheist on account of the theist's other beliefs. Take, for example, the idea (central to cosmological arguments) that the existence of the universe requires a cause. How plausible this seems will depend on how one thinks of the universe. If one thinks of the universe as the totality of what exists, then the idea that it needs a cause will seem nonsensical. After all, any being named as a possible cause would itself exist and *ipso facto* be part of the universe. To an atheist the question, "What is the cause of the universe?" may seem as misguided as the question, "What lies outside the universe?" To the theist, however, who is already accustomed to think of the universe as a bounded entity, distinct from its Creator, the question will seem entirely reasonable.

So perhaps we should not assess religious beliefs in isolation. Perhaps we should take a more holistic and dynamic approach to their assessment. Could we regard sets of religious doctrines as research programs, comparable to the scientific research programs described by Lakatos? Religious doctrines, like scientific research programs, are constituted by webs of beliefs. Those webs each have a “hard core” (perhaps, for theists, belief in God) surrounded by a “protective belt” of beliefs that function as auxiliary hypotheses. They employ concepts (such as “the universe”) that are defined in ways that depend on beliefs found elsewhere in the web. If we did think of religious beliefs in this way, then we might assess them by asking if they form *progressive* or *degenerating* research programs, answering new questions and solving new puzzles, or merely protecting their hard core while making no progress.

There is, however, something odd about the underlying assumption here: the idea that religious beliefs are comparable to explanatory hypotheses. It is true that some religious beliefs play an explanatory role within the lives of believers. They account, in some manner, for how things are. We have already seen that the Christian story of the Fall purports to explain our current state: the pain experienced in childbirth, for example, or the difficulty of farming the earth (Gen. 3: 16–19). Within the Hindu text, the *R̥g Veda*, the *Puruṣasūkta* (hymn of the man) offers an account of the creation of differing kinds of humans (10.90), which “explains” the existence of different classes in human society. The Australian aboriginal stories of “the Dreaming” provide something akin to an explanation of the Australian landscape (Stanner 1965, pp. 272).

One *can* regard these stories as in some sense comparable to the explanations offered by science, even if the “explanations” in question are mythic rather than theoretical, employing narrative and metaphor rather than general principles and laws (Donald 1991, pp. 214, 273–274). But the comparison goes only so far. Firstly, the same stories that play an explanatory role also have a normative function that scientific theories lack. Myth presents the world as a realm of action, rather than a realm of contemplation (Peterson 1999, p. 3). It indicates how the world ought to be rather than simply how it is. The mythic narratives of the Dreaming in Australian aboriginal cultures are (among other things) a “guide to the norms of conduct” (Stanner 1965, pp. 272). The biblical story of the creation in Genesis is not merely an account of how the world came to be; it also encourages observance of the sabbath. The mythic tale of creation in the *R̥g Veda* is often thought to lend support to the caste system, suggesting that we should live in ways that correspond to the type of human being we are.

The second difference is that religious beliefs are, for the most part, not held *as* explanatory hypotheses. There may be believers who accept the doctrines of their community as the best available explanation of a range of phenomena. But they seem to be few and far between. Indeed a prominent Christian philosopher, Alvin Plantinga, has parodied this way of thinking:

What is the best explanation for all that organized complexity in the natural world and the characteristic features of human life and all the rest of what we see about us? Well, let’s see, perhaps there is an omniscient, omnipotent, wholly good being, who created the world. Yes, that’s it; and perhaps this being is one of three persons, the other two being his divine son, and a third person proceeding from the first two (or maybe just the first), yet there are not three gods but one; the second person became incarnate, suffered, was crucified, and

died, thus atoning for our sins and making it possible for us to have life and have it more abundantly. Right; that's got to be it; that's a dandy explanation of the facts. (Plantinga 2000: pp. 386–387)

This does not, of course, prevent Christian apologists from formulating proposed explanations in support of their faith, perhaps the best known examples being the arguments offered by Richard Swinburne (2004). But for many Christian thinkers, arguments of this kind play a strictly subordinate role. As William Lane Craig points out, although they “may be used to support the believer’s faith, they are never properly the basis of that faith” (2008, p. 46).

What is the basis of that faith? In practice, of course, it is most commonly testimony, namely the testimony of one’s family and wider community. But for thinkers such as Plantinga and Craig, the testimony on which they rely is regarded as more than human. It is what John Calvin (1509–1564) called “the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit.” To put this in less theological terms, it is what Plantinga calls a “doxastic experience” which the believer attributes to the work of God (Plantinga 2000, p. 265). This experience is thought to be “self-authenticating”: the beliefs to which it gives rise cannot be false (Plantinga 2000, pp. 259–262; Craig 2008, p. 49). While Plantinga and Craig are Christian thinkers, comparable ideas are found within other religious traditions. Here, too, the basis of belief is often a religious experience, offering what is thought to be direct acquaintance with a divine or unconditioned reality. In theistic traditions, this experience is thought to lend support to some authority, such as that of the Bible or the Qur’an, which is believed to be of divine origin. The act by which one accepts that authority, embracing certain propositions on what is thought to be the testimony of God, is what is known as faith.

Faith as a Source of Knowledge

On this view, religious faith is itself a source of knowledge. More importantly, it is a source of knowledge that is distinct, not just from explanatory arguments, but from any form of human reason. As the first Vatican Council decreed in 1870, in words repeated by Pope John Paul II in 1998:

[T]here exists a twofold order of knowledge, distinct not only as regards their source, but also as regards their object. With regard to the source, because we know in one by natural reason, in the other by divine faith. With regard to the object, because besides those things which natural reason can attain, there are proposed for our belief mysteries hidden in God which, unless they are divinely revealed, cannot be known. (Denzinger and Schönmetzer 1976: §3008; John Paul II 1998: §9)

The view that faith complements reason as a distinct source of knowledge represents a kind of “epistemological dualism.” Once again, similar ideas can be found within other religious traditions, such as Islam, where faith (*īmān*) is also regarded as a distinct source of knowledge. Those who hold to this view may agree that natural reason is bound by certain constraints, perhaps being limited to what can be known through the

senses. But what is known by faith is not limited in this way, since its source is not natural reason, but God himself.

A striking example of this view is to be found in the writings of John Wesley (1703–1791), the founder of Methodism. What is interesting about Wesley is that he admired the work of John Locke. In particular, he shares Locke's rejection of innate ideas. But Wesley departs from Locke in broadening the scope of what can be sensed.

[S]eeing our *ideas* are not innate, but must all originally come from our *senses*, it is certainly necessary that you have *senses* capable of discerning objects of this kind [i.e., “the things of God”]. Not those which are called *natural senses*, which in this respect profit nothing, as being altogether incapable of discerning objects of a spiritual kind, but *spiritual senses*, exercised to discern spiritual good and evil. (Wesley 1796: §32: 14–15)

It is these spiritual senses that allow the believer to have an immediate “perception” of divine realities.

One might argue that, given these views, Wesley should not count as an empiricist, since he seems to be saying that the human mind has a power of intellectual intuition which complements what can be known through the senses. In fact, however, this is no natural power. Although Wesley occasionally suggests that these spiritual senses are present within every human being, being merely dormant in the nonbeliever (Pedlar 2012, p. 101 n.61), their operation is clearly distinguished from that of our natural senses. Their activation, or perhaps their very presence, depends upon faith (Wesley 1853a, p. 490). The ability to perceive the things of God is no natural feature of humans; it is (as Wesley wrote elsewhere) “a supernatural gift of God, above all his natural endowments” (Wesley 1853b, p. 455). The “knowledge” it yields may seem like madness to those who lack faith, but the latter resemble blind people trying to understand color (Wesley 1853c, p. 507).

Despite Wesley's admiration for the work of Locke, it is difficult to distinguish this view of faith from what Locke had condemned as “enthusiasm” (Locke 1997, pp. 614–622: 4.19). Indeed Wesley himself concedes as much (Wesley 1853c, p. 507). Locke firmly rejects any suggestion that faith is a source of knowledge distinct from reason. He accepts that there may be a divine revelation, but insists we need reasons to believe that any alleged revelation is genuine and that we have understood it correctly. Even in matters religious, therefore, (natural) reason must be “our last judge and guide” (Locke 1997, p. 621: 4.19.14). In saying this, Locke distances himself from a longstanding theological tradition and puts a powerful weapon in the hands of the opponents of religion.

References

- Anstey, P. (2005) “Experimental versus speculative natural philosophy,” in P. Anstey and J. Schuster (eds.) *The Science of Nature in the Seventeenth Century: Patterns of Change in Early Modern Natural Philosophy*. Studies in History and Philosophy of Science 19, Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 215–242.
- Bonjour, L. (1998) *In Defense of Pure Reason: A Rationalist Account of A Priori Justification*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Cohen, J. (1992) *An Essay on Belief and Acceptance*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Craig, W. (2008) *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd edn. Wheaton: Crossway Books.
- Cranefield, P. (1970) "On the origin of the phrase: 'Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu.'" *Journal of the History of Medicine* 25: 77–80.
- Denzinger, H., and Schönmetzer, A. (1976) *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum*, 36th edn. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder.
- Donald, M. (1991) *Origins of the Modern Mind: Three Stages in the Evolution of Culture and Cognition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Galen of Pergamon (1985) "On the sects for beginners," in M. Frede (ed.) *Three Treatises on the Nature of Science*. Indianapolis: Hackett, pp. 3–20.
- Hacking, I. (1984) "Experimentation and scientific realism," in J. Leplin (ed.) *Scientific Realism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 154–172.
- Hoyningen-Huene, P. (2013) *Systematicity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- John Paul II (1998) *Fides et Ratio: Encyclical Letter of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Relationship between Faith and Reason*. Strathfield, NSW: St Paul's Publications.
- Lakatos, I. (1970) "Falsification and the methodology of scientific research programmes," in I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave (eds.) *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge: Proceedings of the International Colloquium in the Philosophy of Science, London, 1965*, Vol. 4. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 91–196.
- Locke, J. (1997) *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. R. Woolhouse. London: Penguin.
- Loeb, L. (1981) *From Descartes to Hume: Continental Metaphysics and the Development of Modern Philosophy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Markie, P. (2015) "Rationalism vs. empiricism." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rationalism-empiricism/> (accessed 10 September 2018).
- Norton, D. (1981) "The myth of 'British empiricism.'" *History of European Ideas* 1: 331–434.
- Pedlar, J. (2012) "Sensing the Spirit: Wesley's empiricism and his use of the language of spiritual sensation." *Asbury Journal* 67: 85–104.
- Perrin, J. (1916) *Atoms*, trans. D. Hammick. New York: D van Nostrand. Original work published 1913.
- Peterson, J. (1999) *Maps of Meaning: The Architecture of Belief*. New York: Routledge.
- Plantinga, A. (2000) *Warranted Christian Belief*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Quine, W. (1951) "Two dogmas of empiricism." *Philosophical Review* 60: 20–43; reprinted in W. Quine (1953).
- Quine, W. (1953) *From a Logical Point of View*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Quine, W. (1974) *The Roots of Reference*. The Paul Carus Lectures, LaSalle: Open Court.
- Quine, W. (1995) "Naturalism; Or, Living within one's means." *Dialectica* 49: 251–261.
- Reichenbach, H. (1961) *Experience and Prediction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Original work published 1938.
- Salmon, W. (1999) "Ornithology in a cubical world," in D. Greenberger et al. (eds) *Epistemological and Experimental Perspectives on Quantum Physics*, Vienna Circle Institute Yearbook 7. Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 303–315.
- Stanner, W. (1965) "The Dreaming," in W. Lessa and E. Vogt (eds.) *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, 3rd edition. New York: Harper & Row, 269–277. First published in T. A. G. Hungerford (ed.) *Australian Signposts*. Melbourne: F. W. Cheshire, 1956.
- Swinburne, R. (2004) *The Existence of God*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Teller, P. (2004) "What is a stance?" *Philosophical Studies* 121: 159–170.
- Thomson, J. (1987) "Cathode rays." *Philosophical Magazine* 5: 293–316.

- Van Fraassen, B. (2002) *The Empirical Stance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Wesley, J. (1796) *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, 8th edn. London: G. Whitfield.
- Wesley, J. (1853a) "Sermon 115: On the discoveries of faith," in *Sermons on Several Occasions*, Vol. 2, 11th edn. London: William Tegg & Co., pp. 489–495.
- Wesley, J. (1853b) "Sermon 105: On conscience," in *Sermons on Several Occasions*, Vol. 2, 11th edn. London: William Tegg & Co., pp. 454–461.
- Wesley, J. (1853c) "Sermon 117: The difference between walking by sight, and walking by faith," in *Sermons on Several Occasions*, Vol. 2, 11th edn. London: William Tegg & Co., pp. 501–508.
- White, R. (2003) "The epistemic advantage of prediction over accommodation." *Mind* 112: 653–683.

Pragmatism

ROBERT ALMEDER

The term “Pragmatism” means different things to different people. So, at the outset, it may be helpful to determine in some measure what all pragmatists generally believe, and in virtue of which we call them pragmatists. Surely we cannot succeed in answering such questions as “What makes somebody a pragmatist?” or “What, if anything, do pragmatists say about the belief in God?” if we cannot first clarify what “Pragmatism” generally means by reference to what it is that all pragmatists share and defines them as pragmatists? In the end, after discussing some prominent differences among pragmatists, we will examine whether there is a defensible and distinctively pragmatic argument for belief in God and some form of theism.

Beginning as far back as 1908, when A. O. Lovejoy distinguished between 13 varieties of pragmatism (Lovejoy 1908), and somewhat later when F. S. C. Schiller urged that there were as many “pragmatisms” as there were pragmatists (Schiller 1927), historians of philosophy have tended to claim that pragmatism, like most philosophical movements, is less like a movement with specific doctrines universally shared by its proponents than it is like a movement loosely bound by a few general beliefs and attitudes that share something of a “family resemblance” or spirit. There is a measure of philosophical safety in such a strategy.

Doubtless, there is even more safety in refusing to answer the question “What is Pragmatism?” and instead making it look as though one is answering it by launching into a detailed examination of classical pragmatists, such as Peirce, James, Dewey, Royce, Mead, Lewis, Goodman, Quine, Rorty, Rescher, Putnam, Sellars, Van Fraassen, Brandon, and others. Anyway, the failure of historians of philosophy to define or characterize pragmatism in terms of the core theses commonly held by all classical and contemporary pragmatists continues to be a popular reason why pragmatism sometimes gets a bad press at home and abroad for encouraging a group of willful “wishful thinkers” preoccupied with the non-cognitive utility of beliefs, or constructing beliefs

that are morally good to endorse while consciously ignoring whether such beliefs are true. These same critics of pragmatism seem perennially comfortable with making claims such as “We do not want to know whether believing in, say, the God of the omni-predicates is good or useful for us to accept; we want to know whether it is true that the God of the omni-predicates, for example, exists, quite independently of the utility of such a belief or whether it merely pleases us to believe in such a God.”

We can now characterize or define “pragmatism” by appeal to the following six points, and thereafter we can say something about the most common objections to pragmatism as here briefly characterized.¹ The topic of pragmatism and theism we will examine last in this discussion.

Pragmatism and Knowledge

First, pragmatism more than anything else is a theory about the origin, nature, and limits of human knowledge. As such, pragmatists see human knowledge as the product of belief-forming activities whereby humans seek to adapt to the environment under the principle of homeostasis. Beliefs and systems of belief, therefore, are instruments or mechanisms generated by humans for the purpose of adapting successfully to their environment. Accordingly, human inquiry is the process whereby we seek to pass from a state of not knowing how to respond to the world (an aggravating state from which we all wish to escape) to a state of forming beliefs that shall not fail as instruments of adapting successfully to the world.² Ultimately, beliefs or systems of belief are acceptable or unacceptable as items of knowledge to the extent that they facilitate under a certain methodology one’s dealings with one’s sensory experience.

Secondly, for the pragmatist all the rules of evidence and the canons of rational acceptance for various beliefs about the physical world are valid only to the extent that they generally tend, either directly or indirectly, to produce beliefs that are successful, that is, that allow us to manipulate successfully our environment to meet our deeper, or most urgently felt, biological needs.

Thirdly, all beliefs (or systems of belief) about the observable world are *fallible*, that is, subject to indefinite revision and rejection under the methods of natural science, although not all at once. This means that, at any time, the truth value we assign to our beliefs is subject to future revision or withdrawal as a result of ongoing (and incoming) evidence and changes in our rules for examining that evidence. Even in mathematics, the truth of our beliefs is always a function of how we choose to define the basic terms which, had our needs for adaptation been different, we might have defined differently. With perhaps one exception (the principle of non-contradiction), even the basic laws of logic are subject to revision if the needs of human survival dictate such revision. Consequently, for the pragmatist there are no eternal truths in Aristotle’s sense, that is to say, there are no propositions about this physical world whose truth values are immune to possible revision in the light of future changes in evidence. The abandonment of Ptolemaic astronomy, the passage of the Phlogiston theory of combustion, absolute space and time, and the humour theory of disease are by no means isolated examples in the history of science of belief rejection because of the appearance of unexpected new evidence or change in the rules of evidence and confirmation.

Fourthly, the only and *privileged* method for determining which beliefs about the physical world and its properties are acceptable is the scientific method as practiced in the natural sciences. Indeed the only criterion for the meaningfulness of any proposition about the physical world is whether it is confirmable or falsifiable by appeal to the prevailing methods of testing and confirmation in the natural sciences. Let me explain this a bit more.

Alone, the scientific method has succeeded in providing us with beliefs that in the long run and on the whole, are successful in allowing us to adapt to the vicissitudes and forces of the physical universe. So, the only test for determining whether our methods of acquiring beliefs is a valid method is whether the application of that method produces beliefs that ultimately allow us in the long run to so adapt. Such generally successful beliefs we must, and usually do, regard as true, and the scientific method is the reliable generator of them. So, the truth or acceptability of one's beliefs will always be a function of whether what one should expect to see on the sensory level if the belief were true, obtains, or will continue to obtain, into the indefinite future. The truth of the claim that Columbus discovered America, for example, is not a function of whether the belief that he did is traceable to someone seeing that he did. Rather it is a function of whether that belief will continue to be accepted by all future scientific inquirers into the facts. In the meantime, robustly warranted assertibility provided by the canons of evidence and confirmation in natural science is the pragmatist's conception of human knowledge even if from time to time such beliefs turn out not to be demonstrably true. We seek the truth about this world, and claim to have it when our beliefs are robustly confirmed or verified. But whether we ever have the truth rather than the high probability of truth, is a known unknown. As a condition for human knowledge, pragmatists are frequently accused of abandoning truth for robust confirmation.

But some pragmatists, including Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey, along with their respective admirers, go further than simply adopting the inductive and deductive methods of the natural sciences in order to determine the epistemological reliability of beliefs about the physical world. They add that under certain conditions there are some proposed beliefs that we can neither confirm nor disconfirm under the inductive or deductive methods of testing and confirmation in the natural sciences. Such beliefs, nevertheless, can be epistemologically justified, and hence rationally acceptable because when adopted as true, they directly or indirectly produce behavioral or epistemological consequences that provide for suitable adaptation under homeostasis, or natural selection, just as efficient as beliefs forged under the anvil of the inductive/deductive methods of natural science. Like the beliefs established in good science, those beliefs also have a right to exist under the same general rubric that justifies the beliefs emerging from sound scientific practice.

Generally, then, pragmatists adopt the position that some beliefs about the physical world are rationally justified under certain test conditions, even when they do not admit of any explicit or direct justification by conscious appeal to inductive or deductive inference from antecedently known or justified beliefs. Those test conditions obtain when, after exhaustive reflection and inquiry the proposition proposed for belief has no currently discernible inductive or deductive evidence against our accepting it, and when there is some reason for thinking that the belief, if adopted as true, would have a demonstrable tendency to produce consequences providing either cognitive or moral

utilities that would not otherwise obtain. One way to express more succinctly this defining pragmatic principle (PP) is as follows:

(PP) Assuming that the proposition P is a statement or a belief affirming the existence of some physical property, law of nature, or self-evident belief of common sense, a person will be rationally justified in accepting P as true if

(1) After exhaustive research there is no available conscious inference, either inductive or deductive, from other antecedently known or justified beliefs that would either confirm or disconfirm the proposition P, and if

(2) There is some real possibility that willfully accepting P as true, or very likely to be true, will have a demonstrable tendency to provide behavioral consequences more productive of cognitive or moral utilities than would be the case if one had accepted instead either the denial of P or nothing at all.

Stated more simply, as long as there is no compellingly demonstrable evidence either for or against accepting P, and as long as willfully accepting P could provide cognitive or moral consequences that would tend to better the world or the believing subject, more than if the subject were to disbelieve P, or believe nothing at all relative to P, then one would be fully justified in accepting P as true or justified. One is thus at liberty to accept certain beliefs about the world even when they cannot be inductively or deductively justified scientifically if only accepting them would likely produce some positive consequences for the believer or others by way of advancing some cognitive or moral values – including one's human happiness.

As an application of (PP), for example, most pragmatists, as we shall see, are sympathetic to accepting the inductive method as a reliable way of providing justified beliefs about the world simply because, while there is, as David Hume taught us, no inductive or deductive demonstration of the reliability of the inductive method, there is also no good reason to reject that method as a source of knowledge because in the long run it produces other beliefs allowing us to predict precisely our sensory experiences under certain conditions and thereby permits the production of other beliefs whose adoption and application allow us to navigate more successfully under homeostasis. If we are uncomfortable with calling this a justification of induction, we may, if we like, agree with other pragmatists that this is at least a non-circular *vindication* or *validation* of induction as a source of reliable belief.

Fifthly, William James (1956), among others, came to believe that there was nothing at all wrong with accepting the proposition that humans have "freedom of choice" even though that proposition cannot be established either deductively or inductively in natural science. He accepted it because he believed that that particular belief, once accepted, is more likely than its denial to produce the motivation necessary to make the world a better, and hence a happier place. He assumed that somewhere down deep we all unaccountably feel a strong moral responsibility to ameliorate the human condition in some way, as a necessary condition for attaining deeper human satisfaction or happiness (Almeder 1986; 2007). James also granted that one might also be at liberty to reject such beliefs if they have a tendency to produce pain and misery instead

of any positive utilities. At any rate, those who deny (PP) for whatever reason will deserve the label non-pragmatist.

Sixthly, some human knowledge is about an independent external world, that is, a world whose existence (and some of whose properties) are neither logically nor causally dependent upon the existence of any number of human minds. In short, even if there were no human minds, there would still be a world of physical objects with various properties.

Pragmatic Differences

In spite of the six characteristics just noted among the classical and non-classical pragmatists, there are still some items that differentiate them without diminishing what they have in common. Take for example, the belief in abstract or theoretical entities, or the belief in such things as souls, or the existence of minds as distinct from, and irreducible to, any property of brains. Charles Peirce, G. H. Mead, Josiah Royce, William James, C. I. Lewis, Wilfrid Sellars, Nicholas Rescher, and W. V. Quine all held that there is no reason in principle why the method of the natural sciences could not establish the existence of either unobservable or abstract entities if belief in such entities led to sensible results that could not be explained without supposing the existence of such unobservable or abstract entities. This is what W. V. Quine meant when he often asserted that whatever values our scientific theories must take in order for our theories to work successfully is what is *real* – and the *real* changes as those truth-values change and shift. If, as Quine asserted, belief in the gods of Homer is demonstrably required to make our theories come out right as a source of reliable prediction, then the gods of Homer exist.

On this last point, William James went even further, when arguing that if some proposition recommended itself to our belief, and if there were no systematic observational evidence compelling rational assent one way or the other, then we have every right to accept the belief if in so accepting it we are more likely to produce some moral value that would not otherwise occur. James's view here reflects James's fundamental principle that *truth is a species of the good*, and that if natural science is acceptable only because it produces useful beliefs, then why should we not accept generally useful beliefs when the methods of the natural sciences cannot speak to the issue directly, and when the sort of belief involved has nothing to do with ascertaining the nature of some physical law or property?

For James, then, when the canons of science cannot either falsify or verify some proposed belief, the rational acceptability of that belief is purely and simply a question of whether it is better for us to accept it than not. James was certainly an empiricist, but he also thought that whatever justifies our following the methods of the natural sciences also justifies accepting certain beliefs even when the usual methods of the natural sciences could not test or confirm them. We accept the deliverances of science as indicative of the way the real world is because beliefs based on such deliverances have proven reliable as instruments for prediction and control, hence for biological adaptability – the unquestionable good. More on this later.

C. I. Lewis, however, would not go quite as far as James did. Lewis was willing to countenance belief in certain abstract entities (such as minds irreducible to some property of the brain only if belief in such entities furthered the ends of a scientific explanation, that is, only if belief in such entities allowed us to predict and control the forces of nature better than any other belief.

John Dewey, on the other hand, saw the scientific method as systematically incapable of verifying or falsifying hypotheses about unobservable entities. In Dewey's philosophy, there were no angels, ghosts, gods, or Cartesian immaterial substances (minds). For Dewey, such objects are not physical objects. They are incapable of being established as real under the method of the natural sciences. Dewey's world is made up of only observable physical objects governed by the laws of physics.

Charles Peirce, the reputed father of American philosophy, kept his options open on the issue of abstract entities, but he also argued often against what he called the imperialism of reductive materialism, and in his diary he said he prayed to God to make sure he died before his wife, Juliette, did, as he would have no reason to live thereafter. But he also offered, as we shall see below, what he called "the neglected argument for the reality of God" as proof for the existence of a somewhat vaguely defined God. Even so, he rejected what he called *seminary philosophy* and argued strongly that the only proper way to fix belief in the existence of anything in this world would be under the methods of the natural sciences. Only in that way, he often said, could one avoid wishful thinking about the nature of the physical world. More on this shortly when we discuss pragmatism and theism.

Standard Objections to Pragmatism

Perhaps the most common objection to Pragmatism as characterized above, consists in asserting at the outset that all pragmatists will be fallibilists. Fallibilists, of course, typically do not deny that there is human knowledge. Rather they define human knowledge as a product of scientific methodology producing highly probable beliefs or beliefs robustly warrantably assertible under the usual canons of empirical testing and verification. As such, the objection here hinges on accepting that knowledge does not require the demonstrable attainment of truth rather than a high probability of truth, and that attainment will always be subject to truth-value revision in the light of future evidence and changes in our rules for interpreting future evidence.

So, to repeat, pragmatists will invariably define scientific knowledge as a matter of warranted assertibility producing the highly probable and robustly confirmed fallible beliefs – meaning beliefs very probably true but subject to revision and rejection in the light of changing bodies of evidence or the rules for interpreting the evidence. Here the anti-pragmatist will object that as long as there is some probability, however small, above zero for the falsity of any belief about this world, such beliefs (even if fully accepted as true) cannot provide human knowledge because they do not guarantee the truth of what one asserts, but at most only the high probability of truth. This is the core of the first major anti-pragmatist argument. It is a common objection. As such it proceeds from accepting the belief that human knowledge requires the truth of what

one claims to know, but truth (as ordinarily understood) is not demonstrably attainable rather than the high probability of truth.

For pragmatists, then, the absence of any demonstrable truths means that if there is any knowledge at all about an external world, it will be a function of appealing to rules and standards of rational acceptance prevalent in one's wider scientific community. This is also called *classical verificationism*. That will be enough to guarantee the utility of one's beliefs as far as we can see. Verificationism is also thought to confuse truth with conditions or criteria for determining truth.

Put differently, according to the anti-pragmatist, pragmatism is ultimately a form of absolute skepticism about knowledge of an external world and its properties, because, owing to its fallibilism, it is a deep form of cultural relativism in epistemology. There is a profound difference, anti-pragmatists often affirm, between the truth of one's beliefs and their utility and capacity to provide beliefs that allow through prediction maximum predictability.

Incidentally, the typical response to this objection to pragmatism, namely, that pragmatism is profoundly skeptical for lack of being able to determine the truth of our beliefs rather than the verification of them, is arguably false because we obviously know, as a simple matter of *common sense*, that some of our beliefs are true, and we have no difficulty in often picking them out. In ordinary parlance, they are the beliefs that we regard as so *certain* that it would be foolish to honestly doubt them although they are not beliefs established under the methods of natural science. Such beliefs, might be "I exist here and now," or "I was not born yesterday," or "2 plus 2 is 4" or "Some human beings now inhabit the planet earth."

In response to this typical response, the late Donald Davidson once summarily dismissed that response with the observation: "The road to hell is paved with common sense beliefs." Unfortunately, he never offered an argument for that claim. One might suppose that he would have pointed to past common sense beliefs that led us astray. But others will recall Aristotle's claim that not every belief about the world can be justified by appealing to another justified or known belief. Some beliefs need to be primitive and for which the question "How do you know?" can only be answered by "I cannot help but believe it, and it seems as certain as my belief in my current existence." These are the beliefs of common sense without which the system never gets started. Without such beliefs there would be no knowledge at all. They are uncontestably true as fallible beliefs about this world.

More importantly, we find that more recent pragmatists, (such as Quine, Sellars, Rorty, and Davidson) continued to adopt fallibilism to the end by maintaining that we have no way to reliably determine (or justifiably pick out) which sentences in our language about the external world are true, as distinct from those that are merely robustly confirmed and verified under the methods of science, or are primitive matters of common sense. Even so, they asserted, in the end, that there must be some such true sentences otherwise we would have no plausible explanation for the long-term success of some of our linguistic practices or our theoretical ability to successfully predict and regularly control the world around us.

This, incidentally, is *blind realism*: for various reasons we have no reliable decision procedure for picking out (or determining) which statements or beliefs in our empirical

language are true, but we are fully justified in believing that there must be some true sentences embedded in both our language and our claims about the world, otherwise we would have in principle no plausible explanation for the long-term predictive success of some of our theories and laws about the world. For many reasons that we cannot now discuss, one can argue persuasively that the upshot of pragmatism is, owing to its deep fallibilism, not epistemological relativism or cultural relativism and the insidious skepticism (or idealism) implied by such epistemological relativism. Rather the enduring contribution of pragmatism seems to be some basic form of blind realism (see Almeder 1992, p. 151ff; 1998; 2011).

The second most popular *objection* to pragmatism (old and new) is that pragmatists allow that a belief is rationally acceptable when willfully accepting that belief has a clear likelihood of producing some moral value or some measure of psychological satisfaction that would not otherwise obtain – as if the requirements of scientific methodology could be ignored in determining whether some propositions about the world are more or less worthy of rational acceptance, if only they produce some moral value or pleasure that would not otherwise occur. This objection is most often leveled at William James who argued, as we will see, that belief in the existence of God is in fact justified rationally because the general belief in God has produced so much moral good that might never have occurred otherwise. For those who might object to James's position, he would say that belief in the existence of God cannot be empirically verified or falsified by appeal to scientific methodology. Even so, if such a belief produces more happiness or pleasure in the world than would otherwise occur, we have the right to accept such a belief. Why not?

He also thought that freedom of choice (free will) could not be verified or falsified by appeal to scientific evidence (James 1896). Nevertheless, if willfully choosing to believe in free will would have beneficial consequences for humans, they would have every right to believe in free will on those grounds. After all, nobody can show scientifically that free will does not exist; and if it makes one happy to so believe in it then one would be foolish not to accept free will. This is why there are beliefs, according to James, that are not scientifically provable or falsifiable but rationally acceptable for the non-cognitive and moral utilities they can provide.

The problem with the above common objection to pragmatism, namely that pragmatism endorses the view that we can justifiably believe willfully that something is so if it pleases us to so believe it, is not accurate enough to capture James's restriction of his endorsement that only when one's beliefs about the world can neither be verified or falsified scientifically and only when those willful beliefs produce some moral value or pleasure that would not otherwise occur, can we call those beliefs rationally acceptable. James reminds us often that we must not play fast and loose with the facts when establishing our beliefs about the world. First and foremost we must use the scientific method. But we must not also ignore the fact that certain beliefs are rationally justifiable even when there is no scientific evidence either for or against them if only those willful beliefs have a tendency to inspire or produce moral benefits and/or human happiness.

There are, of course, several classical and non-classical pragmatists who would disagree with James for his view that there are willful and deliberate beliefs about this world that are rationally justified but whose justification does not arise from the application of scientific methodology. Dewey and C. I. Lewis come immediately to mind.

Attending to this last objection, and by way of offering another criticism of James, other anti-pragmatism critics note that while James and his supporters are happy to endorse willful beliefs as rationally acceptable when they cannot be justified or falsified under scientific methodology, and when they produce certain clear moral or cognitive consequences, the argument fails because for one person the consequences of a willful belief may be positive and productive of moral value, while for another person the same belief could produce harmful and immoral effects.

Under James's (PP), if I find that for me belief in the existence of God produces nothing but negative moral values and unhappiness as far as I can see, then I am at liberty to reject belief in the existence of God, just as the person who finds the consequences of believing in God very positive by way of cognitive and moral values is at liberty to accept belief in the existence of God. The problem now is that we want to know whether or not God exists, and not whether it makes us happy or unhappy to deliberately believe willfully in the existence of God. James nevertheless argued in effect that it would be silly of me to reject belief in the existence of God if there were no systematic evidence for or against the belief, and if deliberately believing in God made me happy or produced some good or happiness in the world that would not otherwise obtain if I believed the opposite or nothing at all on this issue. More on this later.

Pragmatism and Atheism

Certainly, some pragmatists will be atheists or agnostics on the question of the existence of God, and some will be theists. It all depends on how we define "God." One person's atheism is another man's theism. There does not seem to be any uniquely pragmatic stance on theism or atheism. Pragmatic atheists and agnostics, generally tend to defend their position by affirming either directly or indirectly that only physical objects governed by the laws of physics exist in this world, and the only methods for understanding such objects is the scientific methods as employed in the natural sciences. For them, believing in God is most often a matter of believing in the existence of a non-physical personal being not subject to the laws of physics, and most often a majestic being who is the creator of this world and loves each of us. Such a being we cannot understand or properly describe in human terms. Applying human terms or traits to God assumes that God is very much like us when in fact God is very much not like us. Such a being never began to exist and will never cease to exist. Such a being is all-ordering, all-powerful, all-loving (or all-good), all-knowing, and present everywhere.

Deists, incidentally, are possibly the most parsimonious in describing their God. We sometimes classify them as agnostics or atheists, and possibly even minimal theists. Here again, it will depend on what the concept of "God" means. Typically, deists (such as Ben Franklin, James Madison, Thomas Payne, or Thomas Jefferson) fasten onto the minimalist narrative to the effect that there must be a first cause creator, itself uncaused, of the universe. But there is no worthy evidence that such a being, after starting the causal chain leading to the present world, has had any interest in anything that happens in the world.

Theists typically agree that the God of the omni-predicates exists, and that God wants us to do something or other. Many theists, however, have difficulty in believing that God can be both all powerful and at the same time all-good.

Peirce, James, and Royce were definitely not atheists, whereas Dewey definitely was. Peirce argued for what he called the “neglected argument for the reality of God” (Peirce 1998) and he spent a good deal of time commenting on the existence and nature of the Absolute Mind. Briefly, the first premise of this “neglected argument for the reality of God” asserts the epistemological superiority of instinctive belief over belief based on rational inference. Peirce thought we all had basic instinctive beliefs that were more reliable and more likely to be true than beliefs inferred by appeal to other known or justified beliefs based on reason. These instinctive beliefs are the beliefs that Mother Nature provided us over millions of years. So, our instincts deserve our deepest respect simply because they have allowed us to adapt so successfully over millions of years. Peirce often encourages us never to question our instinctive beliefs. Reason may well fail us long before our basic instincts fail us on any important question. Reason and rational justification cannot prove the existence of the personal God and creator of the universe.

The second premise asserts that we all have an instinctive belief in the existence of a personal God, with God being experienced in brief moments of relaxed “*musings*” (or play) as a majestic being who is the uncaused cause of the world and who sustains our world, and is good, but whose other traits are left basically vague and unspecified. This instinctive belief is episodic, forced, and not the product of conscious or subconscious inference. This belief is experienced not unlike an unpredictable mystical experience. It is ephemeral and transitory. One cannot logically infer the existence of God; one can only know him by “perception” (p.110: 6.553). He goes on to say:

In considering personality, that philosophy is forced to accept the doctrine of a personal God; but in considering communication, it cannot help but admit that if there is a personal God we must have a direct perception of that person and indeed be in personal communication with him. Now if that be the case, the question arises how it is possible that the existence of this being should ever have been doubted by anybody. The only answer that I can at present make is that facts that stand before our face and eyes, and stare us in the face are far from being, in all cases, the ones most easily discerned. That has been remarked from time immemorial. (1998, p.112: 6.562)

Doubtless, like many others, Peirce may have had some sort of an experience that stimulated an instinctive response in him to believe in the existence of a creative and majestic being who resides behind the scenes, so to speak, and who is a first uncaused cause of this world. That this world is in fact created by an uncaused rational being and not the product of pure chance he argued at length and concluded that “... there is a contradiction involved in the very idea of a chance world” (1998, p. 289 [6.404]). He likened this experience to a direct perceptual experience in which one sees that something is so without any rational inference that it is so.

By way of brief comment, there does not seem to be anything particularly pragmatic about Peirce’s Neglected Argument. Also there seems to be little difference, if any, between the classical argument from religious mystical experience and Peirce’s “Neglected argument for the reality of God,” as we have described it. The classical argument from religious mystical experience begins with the claim that some people have what is called an “Of-God” experience. They claim that these experiences are direct and immediate experiences of God, and not the product of any conscious or

unconscious inductive or deductive inference. In these experiences, the subject experiences the indubitable presence of God. Moreover, the Achilles heel of the argument might well reside in the criticism that there is no reasoned proof or justification offered that some or all humans will at some time experience having the instinctive belief in the existence of a personal God with no names or discernible traits beyond that of the uncaused cause of the world. And we must not forget that it is difficult to distinguish between a mystic who prays and sees God and a madman who drinks whiskey and sees snakes.

Besides in the end, Peirce's Neglected Argument is not an argument for the existence of God. It is a statement noting that some people have had these experiences causing them to believe in God. But people who do not have these experiences cannot be expected to accept these experiences as "Of-God," because the evidence for the belief is just the experience itself, and for those who do not have the experience themselves, they do not have the evidence required for believing in the Neglected Argument. Naturally, we cannot conclude that those who have had the "Of-God" experience did not have a direct experience of God. They might have. But those who do not have the same experience will not have the belief in such a God as a result of such an experience.

Anyway, the Neglected Argument is unique to Peirce, and not to be ascribed to any other known pragmatist. Peirce might have been better off advancing his statistical argument (noted above) for the view that there is a contradiction in the heart of the belief that the world was not caused by an uncaused being. But that is a long story for another occasion.

More than Peirce, William James was willing to offer an argument for the validity of belief in God. But it was a nuanced and qualified argument. He saw no compelling empirical or inductive argument for belief in the existence of God, especially a god of the omni-predicates. It has no empirical test conditions. So, he turned to the PP principle. As we saw above, for James when there is no compelling evidence for or against a proposed belief or proposition, and when we are dealing with a forced option, we are at liberty to accept or reject the belief or proposition, depending on whether the consequences of accepting or rejecting the belief are demonstrably good or bad. In his 1902 *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1985) and elsewhere, James emphasizes, for example, that if one's belief in God (however characterized), tends to make one happy or pleased, or if it provides the motivation to better the world in some small way, then one has every justification for so believing in God. But if one's belief in God (however characterized) tends to produce harmful effects, then one is not justified in believing in that God.

James also argued that religious belief, however diverse, has been good for civilization as a whole, as it has produced historically more moral goodness in the world than would otherwise have appeared. The world is better off for the advent of religion than it would have been had the world never had the institution of religion. James himself, however, while favoring the positive effects of religion, was nonetheless reluctant to embrace personally the traditional God of the omni-predicates. He had problems accepting all the omni-predicates and was hesitant to accept any description of God in terms of human traits.

While Peirce's theism was a matter of his accepting a personal God who created the world, and knowledge of whose existence and character was acquired in direct and

non-inferential perception under conditions of musing, James's theism did not advocate the existence of a personal God of the omni-predicates whose nature is ineffable and knowable only by direct perception. In the end, each philosopher was a theist with a different definition of God. If Peirce and James are any indication at all, it seems doubtful whether there is any distinctively pragmatic theism.

Notes

- 1 Some of these points I initially presented in Almeder (1986, esp. pp. 80–81). I repeat some of them here as they pretty much originally appeared. See also Almeder (2012).
- 2 For the textual references supporting these points as present in the works of Peirce, James, Dewey, Mead, Lewis, Royce, Goodman, Rescher, Putnam and Quine, see Almeder (1986, pp. 85–88). Classical pragmatists and many neo-pragmatists share the conditions of the proposed definition offered there. See also Almeder (2012).

References

- Almeder, R. (1986) "A definition of pragmatism." *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 3: 79–87.
- Almeder, R. (1992) *Blind Realism: An Essay on Human Knowledge and Natural Science*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Almeder, R. (1998) *Harmless Naturalism: The Limits of Science and the Nature of Philosophy*. Chicago: Open Court.
- Almeder, R. (2011) *Truth and Scepticism*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Almeder, R. (2012) *Pragmatism: An Overview*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- James, W. (1896) "The will to believe." *The New World: A Quarterly Review of Religion, Ethics and Theology* 5: 327–337. Reprinted in James (1956).
- James (1956) *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*. New York: Dover.
- James, W. (1985) *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, ed. M. Marty. London: Penguin. Original work published 1902.
- Lovejoy, A. (1908) "The thirteen pragmatisms." *Journal of Philosophy* 5: 5–15.
- Peirce, C. (1998) "A neglected argument for the existence of God," in *The Essential Peirce*, ed. Peirce Edition Project. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 434–450. First published 1908 in the *Hibbert Journal*.
- Schiller, F. (1927) "William James and the making of pragmatism." *Personalist* 8: 81–93.

Existentialism

MARIAM THALOS

*Atheists in foxholes, some say they are myths,
Creations of the mind who just don't exist.
Yet, they answered the call to defend with great pride.
With reason their watchword, they bled and they died.*

Alice Shiver

“There are no atheists in foxholes.” This familiar aphorism captures the thought that when attentions are turned to the possibility of extinction, especially if that possibility is imminent and untimely, we are motivated to turn towards the prospect of God in a way that we might not do otherwise. Thus belief in God (or a sufficient openness to the idea that one is prepared to adopt an attitude of supplication in extremis) is an excellent candidate for a motivated form of cognition – a belief or attitude embraced for its expediency in the practical economy of an individual’s life, for comfort, gain, or simple convenience. In extremis, one might be prepared to adopt an openness to the idea of a higher being in a self-serving way, particularly for securing meaningfulness for a life that may be speeding to an untimely close. Theism thus provides an easy solution to the twin problems of death and meaning, problems that seem to be closely allied in the human psyche.

Just as the foxhole is colloquially thought to be a route to religious belief, there is also (and as I will elaborate) a certain considered sociological view that religion as such, and more broadly certain features of human culture – features involving lofty principles or ideals meant to be representative of it, transcending individual lives within it and therefore mattering in enduring ways – are born of a fear of death.

But can persons without faith confront death with equanimity? It is a commonplace that they cannot. Would it help if they could find meaning without faith? We will explore a certain atheistic pathway to meaning – a characteristically existential pathway. Death has a role to play in that pathway as well. We will also examine an

important basis for faith in the foxhole – a basis in common with nihilism both in and out of the foxhole: the *permanence principle*. This principle takes a stand on the nature of meaning in life, a stand that is not harmonious with atheism. I will then argue that the most satisfying conception of meaningfulness is indeed available to the atheist, but (perhaps surprisingly) does not comport so well with theism.

Death

Living things flee from death, at least for the most part. It makes good sense that they should. After all, the urgency of continued living seems to be of a piece with a suite of inalienable biological imperatives. According to biological science, the fundamental biological imperative, and the one from which spring all others (including the imperative to continue living), is the imperative to out-reproduce one's peers – those who compete for the same life-supporting resources in one's ecological niche – in order that one's heritable traits (or anyway the reproductive materials that embed them into a human organism) are better represented in subsequent generations of one's tribe (more generally, one's reproducing population) than those of one's competitors. That is the biological perspective on living; it is all about leaving a biological legacy.

As an answer to the question "What is the point of living?" however, the biological perspective lacks a certain something. It is not a perspective that ordinary people find especially compelling as a way of life (a fact dripping with irony since the biological perspective is intended, in certain schools of thought in the area of philosophy of biology, to capture a universal fact about the individual organism as such). Even when *legacy* is of importance to a given person, that person rarely thinks about legacy in terms of sheer numbers of descendants, as a share of the total number of all descendants. People generally think about their durable contributions to their family's culture, or to society or to humanity, as their legacy. And when a person reflects on the point of living on, in personal terms, they are more likely to focus on things that make their individual lives meaningful to them as centers of experience – that is, from the perspective of a narrative internally forged to be an integrated arc of events, framed throughout by the identity of the subject of that experience.

Still, the two perspectives seem to agree on something. Death is not viewed, by either the biological or the individual perspective, as an enhancement or complement to life. To the contrary: since it marks an end to life, it is viewed as inimical to it. Whether viewed from a biological or ordinary person's perspective, death is a negative. What's more, the knowledge of, and active engagement with, the fact that one will die, especially if that death is imminent, is likely to inhibit life while one still lives it, to arrest the effort to engage in integrated meaningful activity; thoughts of death can shut down one's openness to experience, ensuring a life reduced to basics. Hence the old adage: a coward dies a thousand times, and consequently lives a thousand unconnected, pinched lives.

In non-human animals' lives, the apprehension of death is present (if at all) only when the organism is confronted by dangers like predators or environmental cataclysms like fires, whereupon these trigger the fight-or-flight response. The fight-or-flight response is mediated by stress hormones that work damage on the physiological

organism – harming also its long-term prospects of continued life – if exposure to them is prolonged. In humans, because *homo sapiens* is the only species that can really appreciate death as an inevitability even in moments of safe repose, the very thoughts of death, when they erupt, frequently have to be actively put away or else they will trigger fight-or-flight, and thus in themselves pose a danger to life. It is argued by proponents of so-called Terror Management Theory (TMT) (see Greenberg et al. 1990, 1992; Greenberg, Solomon, and Pyszczynski 1997) that when thoughts of death are evoked even subconsciously, the fight-or-flight response is also triggered, but it manifests in what may be referred to as “micro aggressions,” aggressions of a covert, stealthy variety. (Laboratory experiments of this theory employ the modern subliminal priming paradigms of cognitive psychology.) Some researchers conjecture that they are similar in character to a variety of aggressions behind racism, misogyny, and other forms of social-category-based antipathies that are premised on perceived threat. The larger aggressions, explicit and implicit, are thus a result of implicit, subconscious cognitive processes.

How to put away thoughts of death? The very best way, it would seem, is via a strategy of distraction or misdirection, via a drawing of attention instead to positive, life-affirming thoughts and thoughts of things that make life meaningful instead of finite. According to some scientists – such as the anthropologist Ernest Becker (1973), much admired by the school of experimental psychologists called *existential psychology*, devisers of TMT – this is the very function of religion, but also of culture more generally – and in particular of that aspect of culture that makes mention of certain ideals that transcend individual lives. Such ideals are at the basis of cultural norms of behavior; they instill values and inspire goals in individuals. More generally, culture normalizes, standardizes, and provides context for the life projects of individuals. For instance, the narrative of freedom in the United States is representative of a cluster of individualistic ideals, giving rise in members of the society to a certain range of ambitions consistent with or flowing from those ideals, as well as setting in motion a variety of activities and sustaining them accordingly through public policies enacted by political institutions. A cultural mythos gives individuals within its ambit a vision of something that transcends their own lives, a vision of something to live as well as to die for. According to TMT, the mythos is symbolic of the culture, indeed of the individual lives lived within it. It can be a means of connecting those individuals to the past and future of their social group.

It is worthwhile thinking about why this can be true. Why is it possible that affirming values dominant in one's society, values held up for imitation (and for further dissemination by the faithful) – why is it possible that affirming the culture's values can alleviate stresses caused by apprehensions, explicit or implicit, of life's finitude? Why can such acts of affirmation substitute, in some way, for true immortality? This is no small question. How to answer it? Is there an empirical way of testing proposed answers to it? It is quite doubtful that there can be direct empirical tests of proposed answers. Indeed, how do we come up with hypotheses, by way of answers, to test? Potential answers have to emerge from philosophical and/or sociological frameworks that address questions about the nature of self and identity, in conjunction with a variety of other hypotheses about the role of each in behavior. The answer has to explain how it is possible that an individual who appreciates the inevitability of personal demise can take comfort instead from the survival of groups in which they enjoy membership – can view the latter as a

(partial) antidote to the former. The answers must address how the identity of the individual is intertwined with that of the multitude of interlocking groups to which they belong, so that the survival of one or more of these, or institutions or projects associated with them, can function at least in the economy of an individual's cognitions as a kind of partial survival of that individual and her projects. The answers must address the question of how it is possible to live vicariously – to live by proxy. The answers must explain how the longevity of a group is capable of serving as some sort of remedy to the comparative non-durability of the individual members of it. (And it must leave a place for addressing too the problematic knowledge of the non-durability of the very groups whose relative durability serves as a temporary remedy – as individuals may contemplate that everything human will most likely come to an end.) The answers must therefore involve an expansive concept of self, or at any rate an expansive concept of the symbols of the self. The answers must therefore be grounded in a suitable philosophical theory of selves and their function in the economy of an individual's mental life.¹

The biological perspective takes death, and even thoughts of death, as an unadulterated bad, especially when threats to life are not imminent. But perhaps this is wrong, or anyway short-sighted. If the existential psychologists (following Becker) are right, then thoughts about and reacting to death (real or symbolic) are responsible for culture. So if death is a bad, it is not an unadulterated bad; at the very least, it has rather paradoxical, ironic, or poetical consequences. But perhaps more prosaically, death makes planning possible. Deadlines in general do. We humans are often helped by working backwards in thought from the goal to be achieved toward the steps one must take to achieve it. Therefore, the most significant deadline of all is the most impactful on the shape of life. We are “being-towards-death,” in the memorable phrase of Heidegger (1962, §50). In the end, according to the preponderance of existential thought, death isn't so much a barrier to meaningful living so much as it is a reason to shape one's life according to one's own conceptions of a good life. Rather than inhibiting life, death is a prompt to freedom through forcing each individual to articulate a personal, meaningful path before the end of the light. It is less foe than friend.

Living in the Context of Human History

Homo sapiens is perhaps the first earthly species to appreciate their place in history, both natural history and human history, as the aggregated narrative of the lives of many persons, including the undertakings, collectives, and institutions that crystallize within it. As individual humans, we share a history with other human beings (and non-human beings too), quite often in overlapping associations and groups; but we each also enjoy a personal narrative within that broader history. This awareness of the ever larger context of our lives is a fundamental aspect of living as a human being. And it has an increasing impact on how we live out our lives in real time as we grow into adulthood, especially in how we go about making choices. It has a pervasive impact on the postures that we strike towards life when we act with the future in mind, as we ultimately must do as adults. (The child is not capable of seeing that perspective; thus the growing up of a human child is a uniquely transformative sequence of events in the natural world.)

To live with the extended future in mind is no small feat. (An industry of research purports to demonstrate human feebleness in regard to long-term planning.) It requires appreciating the fact of unavoidable death while at the same time pursuing the meaning made possible by the fact of term-limited life. I'll refer to these as the twin problems of death and meaning. A conception of the extended future refers also to the extended past – the past even before the event of one's individual birth. Humans, it cannot be denied, are obsessed with origin stories, not only of themselves individually, but also of the origins of their groups. Monotheistic religion offers one way of managing the twin problems of death and meaning. The proposed solution is to insist that participation in the proffered religious activities guarantees immortality while at the same time the said activities confer meaning. But this solution routinely involves a motivated cognition – a faith (aptly named) in something (specifically monotheism and its associated account of the meaningful life), not on the basis of reasoning from evidence, but on the basis of the hoped-for consequences of faith as narrated by the faithful who go before. Motivated cognitions are, by definition, not truth-directed cognitions. And for that reason they are problematic. Classical existentialism offers an alternative to the theistic solution – an alternative to the twin problems of death and meaning. The existential path offers a solution to the twin problems that is available to atheists; the question with which I will ultimately conclude is whether the existential path might also be available to theists. I think that it may be closed to them.

Let's begin the main work of this essay with a brief primer on existentialism. I shall be using that term to denote that school of philosophy associated primarily with the names of Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Martin Heidegger, and Søren Kierkegaard. This school of thought rejects the idea that the primary directive of human thought is to apprise one of the facts of one's world; existentialism seeks instead to elaborate on how the experience of subjecthood serves as foundation for a subject's judgments about how to live in that world, how to undertake action in it, how to be sources of behavior in it and not merely the scenes of such behavior. It seeks to answer the question: What is experience like, such that it can give rise to actions that taken together with those experiences, make up the life of a Person? Existentialism, as I am here using the term, is fundamentally a repudiation of the "primacy of knowledge," associated especially with Descartes, and an affirmation instead of the primacy of living and acting.

Many writers who embrace the label of existentialism speak of death not as an enemy but as a fundamentally important, even central, feature of the landscape around which we cultivate human meaning. Death is construed as an ally. Rather than expecting an immortal and all-powerful being to act on behalf of humanity against death and in the establishment of meaning, existentialist thought has typically employed death as the very figure around which humans craft their own meaning. Death is the galvanizing figure that prompts the still-living to craft a life worth living. It is the human being who must inject meaning into the world – because the world as such is empty of meaning. Jean-Paul Sartre is famous for declaring that even the theist cannot help but act as the agent of meaning. In "Existentialism is a Humanism," he writes:

A certain mad woman who suffered from hallucinations said that people were telephoning her, and giving her orders. The doctor asked, "But who is it that speaks to you?" She replied: "He says it is God". "And what, indeed, could prove to her that it was God? If an angel

appears to me, what is the proof that it is an angel; or, if I hear voices, who can prove that they proceed from heaven and not from hell, or from my own subconsciousness or some pathological condition? Who can prove that they are really addressed to me? ... If a voice speaks to me, it is still I myself who must decide whether the voice is or is not that of an angel. If I regard a certain course of action as good, it is only I who choose to say that it is good and not bad. (Sartre 2001, p.30)

Thus Sartre can insist that no matter who speaks to us with the aim of issuing imperatives, it is we as authors of our lives who must judge that the voice speaking is one worth listening to. Before we can listen, we have to confer the authority to be heard on the one speaking. We cannot, no matter what we do, shirk, delegate or otherwise offload this task onto anyone else. Ultimately all the work of significance – of meaning-making, as it is appropriately called – falls ineluctably on the individual's shoulders. And hence Sartre can say that human beings are condemned to be free. No one individual's meaning can count as anyone else's. It is a precondition of human subjecthood that one accept the compulsory duty to create meaning for oneself, to become, in the process, *authentic*. This theme is quintessential of existential thought.

The proposition thus posed faces two important problems. First, it seems that our experience would indicate otherwise: it seems as though social circumstances can indeed prevent one from making authentic choices – the clearest cases are the cases of slavery. An eligible response here might be that in slavery the one true authentic response is resistance, in whatever form possible.² The second problem is perhaps the more serious: it seems as though many complacent people, born into comfortable or privileged circumstances, can go through life simply accepting cultural norms and making no authentic or tough choices for themselves. And it seems furthermore as though Sartre's own example of the so-called madwoman exemplifies this problem rather than illustrates Sartre's own point. For the madwoman, the voice of God seems to be a given; she doesn't seem to need to do any conferring of authority to speak upon it – calling it "God" is enough. Similarly for the most ordinary person, the voice of a parent or other figure that is held up for admiration is often uncritically accepted as authoritative, particularly when it commands her to do as she would have pleased to do anyway. It is this problem that Kierkegaard faced squarely and dedicated his considerable intellectual energies to addressing.

Kierkegaard, who is sometimes referred to as the father of existentialism, devoted the bulk of his oeuvre to addressing the question: How can one be an authentic member of one's meaning-making group, if one is raised within it? This question haunted him; he found the existential complacency of his fellow Danes, nominally all Christian, unworthy of the denomination "Christian." He sought to provide intellectual pathways for the authenticity Sartre would later announce is always available. How to be a true Christian in Christendom? How to make a choice in favor of a way of life to which one seems already committed by virtue of one's birth and upbringing – factors completely outside one's control?

One can put this problem differently, without the language of religion or even that of authenticity: in order to belong to certain groups,³ one must self-admit into its membership by choosing the group and thereby separating oneself from the group's competitors – one cannot be inducted by others into societies whose membership conditions revolve

entirely around acts of self-declaration; but if one is somehow already within the ambit of the group from birth, how is one to make such a choice? How is one to enter, as though from the outside, when one is already, by and from birth, on the inside? How is self-admission then possible? It is a kind of paradox. And Kierkegaard resorts to paradox in service of extricating persons in these paradoxical circumstances: he highlights uncomfortable narratives against which to pit the dominant and more comfortable cultural narratives of Christendom. For instance, he narrates (1985) the story of Abraham to highlight and de-normalize these features, such as the fact that God commanded the father of his own chosen people to kill that father's only child. The strategy he chooses is to render the familiar at the same time unfamiliar and socially unpalatable, in order that a choice of self-admission into a now-unfamiliar-seeming association might be possible.

The question with which Kierkegaard struggled is not a question for religious people only. It has broad application. It is, ironically, a question for persons born into societies of the presumptively self-admitted, one they might have been independently pleased to join. Conceived more broadly still, it is the question of how to choose for oneself a meaningful life. If life, or certain life activities, are independently meaningful (that is to say, meaningful independently of what one thinks of them or is socialized to think of them) – if, in other words, meaningful activities are already meaningful and therefore prescribed to those in search of meaning in advance of their other choices – then affirming the meaningfulness of one's life activities is independent of having a meaningful life. But then how is one to *choose, authentically*, a life of meaning? How is one to act in one's own life as author of its meaning, when meaningfulness is not in one's hands? If, on the other hand, there is no independent meaning to life or any pursuit one can take up that is already meaningful before one chooses it (as most existentialists maintain), then what sense can it make to affirm a meaning in it? This is the fundamental question of existentialism.

Some existentialists have thought that navigating the anxieties stirred by thoughts of death provides an aid to navigation. A meaningful life, according to a wide range of existential thought, is a life into which one self-admits (it is chosen as meaningful by the person living it); but to self-admit into a meaningful life is a problematic concept, never mind that it also courts the anxieties around death that one's culture – indeed all culture, if TMT is true – is designed to help us avoid. According to many existentialists, the solution is to embrace these thoughts of death – to find a place for them, to employ them usefully in the exercise of choosing meaning.

It is thus worthwhile examining further the nature of meaningfulness, and the various concepts of meaningfulness available to theist and atheists. Must their very conceptions of meaningfulness differ?

The Logic of Meaning

Utterly meaningless!
 Everything is meaningless.
 What do people gain from all their labors
 at which they toil under the sun?
 ...

All streams flow into the sea,
yet the sea is never full.
To the place the streams come from,
there they return again.
All things are wearisome,
more than one can say.

Ecclesiastes 1: 2–3; 7–8 (NIV)

The existential perspective, involving the conceptualization of life-as-a-counter-to-death, is the polar opposite of another resolution of the problem of death, a no-solution resolution. This is nihilism, the notion that life activity is unqualifiedly meaningless – that, in other words, the puzzle posed by death is insoluble simply because death entails that good things, absolutely all good things, and indeed all things without qualification, must come to a dusty end – that nothing makes a permanent difference. The universe is unheeding of what human beings do; like a 1970s sitcom it is always returning to a resting state or a state that utterly annihilates the significance of events of recent provenance. Nihilism too is a theme in post-World War II literature (and so coeval with the mainstream forms of existentialism with which it is sometimes confused). In this section I will develop the argument that nihilism is premised on a certain tenet of an argument for theism – that, in effect, nihilism and theism are opposite faces of a certain philosophical coin.

We begin with an extended reading of Leo Tolstoy's translucent expression of a nihilist sentiment (in his "Confession"):

My question – that which at the age of fifty brought me to the verge of suicide – was the simplest of questions, lying in the soul of every man from the foolish child to the wisest elder: it was a question without an answer to which one cannot live, as I had found by experience. It was: "What will come of what I am doing today or shall do tomorrow? What will come of my whole life?"

Differently expressed, the question is: "Why should I live, why wish for anything, or do anything?" It can also be expressed thus: "Is there any meaning in my life that the inevitable death awaiting me does not destroy?" (1961, p. 21)

... And this was happening to me at a time when, from all indications, I should have been considered a completely happy man; this was when I was not yet fifty years old. I had a good, loving, and beloved wife, fine children, and a large estate that was growing and expanding without any effort on my part. More than ever before I was respected by friends and acquaintances, praised by strangers, and I could claim a certain renown without really deluding myself. Moreover, I was not physically and mentally unhealthy; on the contrary, I enjoyed a physical and mental vigor such as I had rarely encountered among others my age.

I could not attach a rational meaning to a single act in my entire life. The only thing that amazed me was how I had failed to realize this in the very beginning. All this had been common knowledge for so long. If not today, then tomorrow sickness and death will come (indeed, they were already approaching) to everyone, to me, and nothing will remain except the stench and the worms. My deeds, whatever they may be, will be forgotten sooner or later, and I myself will be no more. Why, then, do anything? How can anyone fail to see this and live? (1961, p. 16)

This sentiment, as I will now explain, is common to the thinking of many theists as well – to persons who believe in an infinite being for the sake of a meaningful life. We’ve already noted that theism is the solution preferred by some to the twin problems of death and meaning. On the one hand, theism of the right sort is a solution to death – if according to it, God will grant immortality in some form to persons of the faith. Simultaneously God, and such activities as God bids us engage in, will confer meaning upon the lives believers live, both now and in the afterlife. God relieves the faithful of the double nihilism to which they would otherwise be condemned: (i) death without afterlife and (ii) meaningless lives prior to it.

The difference between the theist and the nihilist, on the subject of meaningfulness, lies entirely in the fact that the theist is able to solve the twin problems via a belief in God; absent such faith the nihilist, it seems, must descend to Tolstoy’s conclusion. But why? Is there no other way out? To identify alternatives to faith, one needs to diagnose the tenets that lead both the nihilist and the theist described here to their respective conclusions. The diagnosis reveals a common tenet in their thinking – it is the very thought encapsulated in Tolstoy’s narrative. This is the idea that for an event or activity in a life, or for an entire life, to be meaningful, it must have a permanent, and not a merely lasting, consequence. Nothing whose consequences ever come to an end is ultimately meaningful. This is the fundamental idea espoused on the one hand by nihilists and on the other hand by theists who believe in God for the sake of a meaningful life. But there are clear ways of rejecting this shared tenet. We will examine some options for doing so.

To make a start, let’s consider some conceptions about value. Monism (about value) is the idea that there is only one thing that is ultimately of value or significance. Pluralism is the denial of monism, insisting that value or significance attaches to more than one thing. Certain monists insist that the only thing of ultimate value is pleasure. Pluralists, contrariwise, almost univocally insist on a category of non-hedonic value – a value separate from pleasure and which comprises meaningfulness.

It seems to be a characteristic of hedonic value – of pleasure, more colloquially – that it is enjoyed in the moment of experience and is (put somewhat roughly) wholly contained in that experience. What seems to be characteristic of the bulk of hedonic experiences is that the hedonic value in them does not extend much beyond the temporal extent of the experience itself: they do not last – a fact much bemoaned in history. And it seems it is this fact that renders hedonic value problematic in the sense Tolstoy brings to our attention. It does not last, so what’s the point of it? How can it be meaningful to pursue this value in life?

But when one comes down to it, as Tolstoy notes, nothing else lasts indefinitely either, so how can anything be meaningful? Meghan Sullivan (2018) identifies the culprit in this line of argument, calling it the *permanence principle*, and formulates it as follows: “The meaningfulness of an activity at a time depends upon it making a permanent difference in the world” (p.170). If one accepts this principle, and further accepts the proposition that nothing humans do makes a permanent difference – since, for instance, the earth and all its home-grown life will ultimately come to a dusty end – then it follows that nothing we do has meaning.

Embracing the permanence principle renders one unable to lay plans, and so to function on a moment-to-moment basis, at Tolstoy reports on his own experience amply demonstrates. It renders one incapable of seeing either past achievements or future prospects in life as meaningful.⁴ This is the well-worn path to nihilism.

To illustrate that the culprit in the argument for nihilism is indeed the permanence principle, consider the following case.

Lisa's case. Lisa is an immigrant of color to the USA. She is in her senior year of high school, deciding whether to include university in her life plans. She knows that it will make a difference to her future prospects if she does so. Her older sister Lily had wanted to go to university but had been prevented at every turn – no resources, lukewarm support from her school officials, patronizing remarks by teachers suggesting that people with her “background” are usually ill-prepared and end up dropping out and losing out on money and time they could have used better elsewhere. Lily died during the first month of a job in the garment industry. Lisa reasons as follows:

Someone who fulfils Lily's dreams goes to university;
I am (to be) a person who (in Lily's place) fulfils that dream.

Therefore, I shall go to university.

One can interpret Lisa here as assigning meaning to her aspirations on the basis of their connection with the past, with a dead beloved, and *not* on the basis of legacy considerations. (I discuss this form of reasoning under the label of “memorial imitative reasoning,” a form of reasoning that I argue has important existential credentials (Thalos 2016). Most significantly, this line of reasoning is available to people who cannot aspire in their own name, because they have been taught to believe that they are by their biological natures inadequate.) Quite possibly, this rationale can strengthen Lisa's resolve when she encounters obstacles more so than less legacy-oriented considerations can. More importantly, it can render the activity of going to university meaningful even if, at the time of the experience, the activity is neither pleasant nor even fulfilling the promise of a better future. It may therefore be less vulnerable to derailment.

The important thing for our purposes here is that Lisa's rationale for her plans to go to university are not future-oriented at all; certainly those plans do not depend for meaningfulness on their bringing about anything permanent. It will be meaningful enough for Lisa if she can simply fulfill the stated ambitions, even if their fulfillment will have no knock-on good effects. This is nowise to say that this rationale could not be *combined* with a different rationale that *is* future- or legacy-oriented. It is just to say that, in its own right, it has no such pretensions. It is to say that, absent further rationales, this rationale invests her activity with meaning in a distinctive way: it does so by connecting Lisa's life activities with memories of her sister – with something already gone and thus proven impermanent.

The memorial basis for meaningfulness (as we might refer to it) is something we invoke on a routine basis. We say that we are doing this or that for the sake of someone else, or simply in their memory.⁵ This can reasonably be interpreted as the attaching of meaning on a basis entirely independent of legacy considerations, never mind considerations of permanent impact. The memorial basis of meaningfulness is one counter to the nihilism argument. It is a response that an atheist can get behind. It constitutes a challenge to the permanence principle – in particular to the necessity of the permanence condition on meaningfulness.

The theist, by contrast, can argue that because God exists we can indeed satisfy the requirements of the permanence principle: God will ensure that what we do effects a permanent difference – either through granting the faithful immortality or simply through remembering them through eternity (Craig 1994). Of course this offers no comfort to persons outside the fold. The most objectionable feature of the theistic endorsement of the permanence principle is not so much its unavailability to nonbelievers, so much as that it asserts – quite falsely – that nonbelievers have no alternate routes to meaning. It implies that the route via memorial reasoning, and any others proposed, are not routes to meaning. Of course it is the permanence principle, whether accepted by believer or unbeliever, that forecloses other routes to meaning, but what exactly can be said in favor of affirming, rather than denying, the permanence principle?

Permanence

Nihilism has traditionally rested on the permanence principle. And no doubt some (though perhaps not all) theists are attached to their theism out of a need to avoid nihilism. But what about theism itself? For example, do some of the arguments considered by theists about the qualities or perfections of God rest on a commitment to the permanence principle? Do arguments about the immortality of the divine appeal implicitly to a version of the permanence principle? For example, does the view that immortality is a perfection, and so belongs to God, rest on the idea that permanence is in some way preferable to impermanence because of a link between permanence and meaningfulness?

Let's consider this question further.

Is it more meaningful to live a longer life than to live a shorter life? Do persons who die in childhood live less meaningful lives, simply on account of the length of life lived? We tend to think it a tragedy when a person dies in their youth. But is that because the life involved is shorter in absolute terms, or is it simply a matter of it not having fulfilled at least some of its potential – that death was untimely? Only the former is a reason for an argument to the effect that longer lives are better, full stop, than shorter lives, and therefore that permanence is better than impermanence. And surely it is conceivable that there are shorter lives with more significance than longer ones. Hence the significance of permanence, as such, is questionable.

Meaning Objectivism

The permanence principle states that the things that matter ultimately must be durable, must leave a permanent mark. This is a strong principle, and belied by numerous ways people affirm the value of what they do. But permanence is a variety of another principle about meaning – what I will refer to as *meaning objectivism*. This is the principle that the things that ultimately matter must bear the quality of mattering without regard for whether the person who enjoys it, or whose life it features in, judges it to

matter or to be meaningful. Permanence is an objective feature of whatever possesses it, so it passes the objectivity test. In the space remaining I shall be arguing against objectivism, roughly in line with existential thought. This will serve as a further argument against the permanence principle.

Let's work with a concrete if fictional case. In the Frank Capra film "It's a Wonderful Life!" (1946, based on the short story "The Greatest Gift" by Philip Van Doren Stern), the protagonist George Bailey, on the verge of committing suicide for rather different reasons from those of Tolstoy, has his life reviewed for him by the would-be angel Clarence. Unlike Tolstoy, George at this point in time believes that his life was not worth living because he did not fulfill dreams he had dreamt for himself in young adulthood, and has consequently led an unremarkable life. (Tolstoy, by comparison, believed himself to have lived a fulfilled life.) By reviewing his life with him, and also giving him a glimpse of what things might have been like without his interventions, Clarence helps George come around to thinking of it as wonderful and supremely meaningful because of the connections to people he had made and the contributions – good ones – that he made to those people's lives.

One interpretation of the film is as a narrative of discovery for George: George discovers that his life, which he thought was meaningless, is in reality meaningful. George's life is meaningful whether he believes it or not, and George needed a bit of help recognizing this objective fact. This is the objectivist reading of the film. A competing reading is the one I shall favor: this is the reading according to which Clarence, in reviewing George's life with him, reminds him of features of it and highlights many that George might have forgotten or neglected, consequent upon which George judges that his life was indeed meaningful, contrary to a judgment he had rendered earlier in the night. But the new judgment is not simply true where the earlier one was false; rather, the new judgment is the thing that now renders meaningful the life as now reviewed. Just as the older judgment is now false in light of the fact that George has now disavowed it. There is no meaningfulness without it being judged so by the person whose experience or activity it is. I think this is the better reading of the Capra narrative.

Why do I favor the subjectivist reading over the objectivist? Suppose that in the film as Capra did not in fact conceive it, George instead responds to Clarence's provocations with sour and unrelenting refusal to judge the life he led meaningful. Suppose that when Clarence shows him the alternative realities in which George had never existed, George expresses stronger preference for those scenarios over those scenarios that had in fact been realized in his life. What then? Would we still be insisting that George's life was meaningful? What would we be saying if we did so insist? I don't think that we'd be insisting that George's life is meaningful. Or anyway, not successfully. I think that only George can make that judgment, and when he does so judge, he has the final word on the matter. This existentialist principle follows directly from the sayings propounded by Sartre and others on the topic of freedom: freedom, in existential terms, is a matter of being the final arbiter of what is meaningful in one's own life. In other words, meaningfulness is meaningfulness-to-the-subject. There is no other form of meaningfulness.

Sullivan (2018) offers a criticism to the effect that certain forms of subjectivism are flawed. I will adapt her contentions to the existentialist view I have just articulated.

Her criticism is to the effect that subjectivism renders meaningfulness too easy. All one has to do is judge that something is meaningful, and then it is so. Sullivan asks us to consider the case of Denise, who has decided that counting blades of grass is meaningful. So she spends time every day counting the blades of grass in her yard, in spite of the discomfort she suffers from stooping, sweating, and bug bites. Sullivan simply judges that Denise's own judgment is false – it is pointless, she writes, because counting grass blades

does not contribute in any way to anything outside itself. It does not connect Denise with other people or with culture. While it brings her out in nature, it doesn't cause her to appreciate it or understand it in any deep way. It isn't worth her toil and sweat, and no change in her attitude could make [counting blades of grass] worth it. (2018, p.178)

Sullivan is an objectivist.

But consider: there are many things in any given person's life that are liable to connect them with other people and with culture. Not all these would be regarded even by the objectivist as meaningful. For example, phone sales activity can connect caller to persons called or products for sale. Similarly being a slave can connect a person to a master class and its culture. Does either thereby render the associated experience (phone sales or slavery) meaningful? Surely not – not unless the person who experiences the activity judges them to be meaningful. Surely it is a kind of hubris that arrogates to itself the power to judge meaningfulness for others. That power belongs only to the subject of experience – who has both the power to confer meaning and to take it away. This is the existentialist position. And if its embrace requires granting Denise the power to judge that her grass blade counting is meaningful, it is a small price to pay.

But Sullivan has a more powerful argument against subjectivism. Subjectivism, she writes, trivializes life planning. If all one has to do is simply to judge something meaningful, baselessly if necessary, and then simply proceed with the activity in question, as often as possible, one can have a meaningful life cheaply – altogether too cheaply. (Sullivan uses the term “manufactured meaning” as a term of abuse, when in fact an existentialist can believe in no other kind.) According to Sullivan, this does an injustice to the contortions we go through to make difficult decisions such as whether to marry our current paramour or whether to raise children. Such questions require research and, as she puts it “soul searching.” They would not do so if all we had to do to render things meaningful is simply to judge, baselessly, that they are so. I respond that when in “soul searching” mode, we are not so much looking for an answer to the question: “Is this meaningful?” as to the question “Does this suit me? Does it suit the person I aspire to be?” And answers to the latter question are not so much a matter of “research” as they are a matter of – yes – judgment. But saying that something is a matter of judgment as to whether it suits the person in question is not the same thing as saying that it's baseless. Saying that something is a matter of judgment in this sense is saying that it is a matter of *commitment*. The subject has to commit him or herself to the thing in question. And this cannot be done baselessly. It is a matter of examining oneself and judging whether the activity in question can be a fitting aspiration for the person that one is at one's core. And it is subsequently a matter of organizing oneself and one's resources to bear on the chosen aspiration. One does not find this out by “research.” And no one else

can perform this inquiry in one's place. I cannot judge whether something like parenthood or spousehood will suit you – certainly not in the way that you can. And I certainly cannot do the work of commitment for you. (Another reason to appreciate that the work of commitment is not baseless, and third parties do not have the bases for performing it.) All I can do is seek to forecast what you might do. But when you do the proper work of commitment, you make it so – you make it so that the thing you choose fits with your self-conception. This is why you are the authority on the subject.

Existential Meaning

The existential doctrine of meaning must be a subjectivist one. Not because existentialism must reject theism – Kierkegaard's form of existentialism does not do so. Existentialism must embrace subjectivism because of its commitments to self-determination (what existentialists call *freedom*). And thereby it is supremely compatible with atheism. But how might a theist who is also committed to self-determination be positioned vis-à-vis subjectivism? On its face, subjectivism is eligible too in a theist's portfolio. Why not? After all, nothing in the doctrine of theism as such implies that meaning must be objective.

But it is not clear that it would fit comfortably there. After all, the notion of God must play an important role in the economy of a theist's life. If God is not imbuing the theist's life with meaning, what good is he? Of course, he may be there to provide salvation from death, or a life thereafter. But there is a question whether this is enough work for God. If the existence of God demands anything of a believer, how is that demand to be met in the context of self-determination? How does the supposed authority of God comport with the existential doctrine that one must make meaning for oneself? These are questions one can legitimately put to the theist. As of the time of this writing, I am unaware of any even halfway satisfactory answers to them.

Notes

- 1 My account of the social self in solidarity with members of groups to which it belongs (in Thalos 2016) proffers an answer of this sort.
- 2 This point raises many questions about what freedom might amount to, particularly for an existentialist.
- 3 Thalos (2016) addresses this question in some detail.
- 4 Not all groups permit self-admission. This question is also taken up in Thalos (2016, Chapter 7). Scheffler (2013) capitalizes on this idea (not very convincingly, as his critics show) to argue that human beings are not as egoistic as has sometimes been claimed.
- 5 While proponents of TMT would insist that memorials of the sort we build—large statuary, for instance—function in the economy of culture as symbols of immortality, I prefer to think of them as aids to memorial reasoning for the still-living) to memorial reasoning.

References

- Becker, E. (1973) *The Denial of Death*. New York: Free Press.
- Craig, W. (1994) *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*. Wheaton: Crossway Books.
- Greenberg, J., Pyszczynski, T., Solomon, S., Rosenblatt, A., Veeder, M., Kirkland, S., Lyon, D. (1990) "Evidence for terror management theory II: The effects of mortality salience on reactions to those who threaten or bolster the cultural worldview." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 58: 308–318.
- Greenberg, J., Solomon, S., Pyszczynski, T., Rosenblatt, A., Burling, J., Lyon, D., & Simon, L. (1992) "Assessing the terror management analysis of self-esteem: Converging evidence of an anxiety-buffering function." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 63: 913–922.
- Greenberg, J., Solomon, S., and Pyszczynski, T. (1997) "Terror management theory of self-esteem and cultural worldviews: Empirical assessments and conceptual refinements," in M. Zanna (ed.) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 29. Orlando: Academic Press, pp. 61–139.
- Heidegger, M. (1962) *Being and Time*, trans. J. MacQuarrie and E. Robinson. Oxford: Blackwell. Original work published 1927.
- Kierkegaard, S. (1985) *Fear and Trembling*, trans. with an introduction by A. Hannay. London: Penguin. Original work published 1843.
- Sartre, J-P. (2001) "Existentialism is a humanism," in *Jean-Paul Sartre: Basic Writings*, trans P. Mairet, ed. with introduction by S. Priest. London: Routledge. Original work published 1946.
- Scheffler, S. (2013) *Death and the Afterlife*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sullivan, M. (2018) *Time Biases: A Theory of Rational Planning and Personal Persistence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Thalos, M. (2016) *A Social Theory of Freedom*. London: Routledge.
- Tolstoy, L. (1961) "A Confession," in *Recollections and Essays*, trans. L. and A. Maude. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Original work published 1884.

Postmodernism

CHRISTOPHER WATKIN

Postmodern thinkers entertain complex and sometimes contradictory relations with atheism.¹ The complexity arises because there is more than one understanding of what it means to think in a consistently atheistic way, and because of the contention of one prominent stream of postmodern thought that “atheism” itself is inextricably in debt to theism. The contradiction arises when the different postmodern accounts of atheism critique each other over perceived compromises with theistic ways of thinking.

We can gain a rounded sense of what is at stake in the relations between postmodernism and atheism if we examine both the way in which postmodern atheists distance themselves from non-postmodern atheists, and also the way in which they disagree among themselves. To this end, the current chapter will examine three encounters that, taken together, provide the reader with an overview of the stakes of postmodern atheism, and with a suite of concepts that will equip her to approach and evaluate the atheisms of postmodern thinkers not discussed in these pages.

The first encounter is Heidegger’s critique of the statement “God is dead,” uttered by the madman in Nietzsche’s *The Gay Science*.² Though not himself a card-carrying “postmodern,” Heidegger’s critique of what he sees as Nietzsche’s metaphysics provides an indispensable starting point for correctly coming to terms with later postmodern understandings of atheism. We then move to Foucault’s critique of existentialist atheism of the sort propounded by Sartre. Though we can see in Foucault’s rejection of Sartre’s atheism some of the features of Heidegger’s critique of Nietzsche, he also exemplifies a crucial trend in postmodern attempts to take full account of the implications of the death of God, namely the end or disappearance of “man.” Finally, we consider Jean-Luc Nancy’s critique of Alain Badiou’s atheism, and Derrida’s related warnings about Nancy’s own position. Certainly no postmodern thinker, Badiou provides an important critique of postmodern atheism: he argues that it is in fact not atheistic at all but always leaves open a space for the return of what Heidegger (1969, p. 72) called the “divine

God,” sometimes known as the “God of the poets.” In terms of his “deconstruction of Christianity,” however, Nancy shows how Badiou’s own categorical atheism is open to the charge of complicity with theism, and Derrida makes the same charge against Nancy’s own approach. We conclude by arguing that postmodern thinkers show us a number of important features of, and problems with, atheism, and that they demonstrate how difficult it is to follow through consistently on the consequences of the death of God.

Nietzsche and Heidegger

Postmodern atheisms trace their genealogies through multiple filiations,³ but one of the most important reference points is Nietzsche’s proclamation of the death of God in the words of a madman crying in the marketplace:⁴ “The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. ‘Whither is God?’ he cried; ‘I will tell you. We have killed him – you and I. [...] God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him’” (Nietzsche 2001, p.119).

In glossing Nietzsche’s parable in his 1943 lecture “The Word of Nietzsche: God is dead,”⁵ Heidegger (1977) understands the death of God not simply as a matter for priests and theologians but as a moment of the greatest importance for the West as a whole. The death of God is an event for everyone because it spells the end not only of one local deity – the God of the Christians – but of what Heidegger calls the “suprasensory”: “The pronouncement ‘God is dead’ means: The suprasensory world is without effective power. It bestows no life. Metaphysics, i.e., for Nietzsche Western philosophy understood as Platonism, is at an end.” (*GID*, p. 61).

What is Heidegger saying here? That “God,” in Nietzsche’s parable, is an umbrella term that includes, in general, the existence of anything beyond our sense experience (the suprasensory), the idea that there is a ground or basis of things beyond the physical universe (metaphysics) and, specifically, the existence of a world of ideal, ahistorical, and eternal forms, including the forms of perfect truth, perfect beauty and perfect goodness (Platonism).⁶ To lose the suprasensory, metaphysics and Platonism all at once is, with no risk of overstatement, quite a blow to the Western tradition, given that it has frequently relied on Platonic ideas (or “universals”) to guarantee and explain the meaningfulness of language and the intelligibility of the world, and given that the tradition rests on metaphysical notions of truth, goodness, beauty, justice, and so forth both in its theoretical discourse and practical organization.

On Heidegger’s reading, the God who dies in Nietzsche’s parable is “the God of the philosophers,” a deity for which neither Nietzsche nor Heidegger have much time. For Nietzsche, the God of the philosophers is “the last, emptiest, most meagre idea of all” (2005: 169), an idea that in truth was never a god at all but only a human fancy. For Heidegger, this is the God of “onto-theology,” a term he coins from the Greek *ontos* (being), *theos* (God), and *logos* (in this instance: study): the study of God as the highest being. Heidegger has in mind Aristotle’s God, an impersonal, abstract deity referred to as *causa sui* (self-causing cause) and *ens realissimum* (most real being) which he condemns as a convenient philosophical ruse but no true deity: “[*Causa sui*] is the right name for the god of philosophy. Man can neither pray nor sacrifice to this god. Before

the *causa sui*, man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before this god” (Heidegger 1969: 72).

It is important to realize that neither for Nietzsche nor for Heidegger does the death of the God of the philosophers herald a straightforward atheism. For Nietzsche: “How many new gods are still possible! As for myself, in whom the religious, that is to say god-forming, instinct occasionally becomes active at impossible times – how differently, how variously the divine has revealed itself to me each time!” (1968, p. 528, §1038).

Heidegger, for his part, considers the death of the God of the philosophers in far from atheistic terms, arguing in the continuation of the passage quoted above that “[t]he godless thinking which must abandon the god of philosophy, god as *causa sui*, is thus perhaps closer to the divine God” (1969: 72). The “divine God” Heidegger evokes here is the God of the poets, nowhere more vividly conjured than in the poetry of Friedrich Hölderlin. This Romantic deity is the deity of a previously enchanted age when “gods walked among humans” (2008, p. 47, translation altered), but it has now withdrawn from this world and the job of the Romantic poet is to mourn this withdrawal and prepare for the deity’s return.

Thus far we have found Nietzsche and Heidegger to be in broad agreement. One of the most important points of divergence between them, however, comes in Heidegger’s discussion of Nietzsche’s relation to metaphysics. Although Nietzsche identifies the death of God as the end of metaphysics, Heidegger argues that Nietzsche himself remains a metaphysician:

Nietzsche understands his own philosophy as the countermovement to metaphysics, and that means for him a movement in opposition to Platonism. Nevertheless, as a mere countermovement it necessarily remains, as does everything “anti,” held fast in the essence of that over against which it moves. Nietzsche’s countermovement against metaphysics is, as the mere turning upside down of metaphysics, an inextricable entanglement in metaphysics. (*GID* 61)

To understand what Heidegger is saying here, let me describe the mug of Lapsang Souchong tea currently on the desk in front of me. I might say that the mug is “not red” (which indeed it is not). But in doing so, I have still described it in terms of redness. To understand what I am saying about the mug you need a good sense of what redness is, and you need to understand that the mug might be any other color or combination of colors, but not red. The concept of redness is indispensable to understanding my description of the cup. This is very different to describing the mug in a way that has nothing to do with redness at all. In fact, when I say that the mug is “not red” I make the concept of redness as central to my description as if I had said that it is red. Heidegger’s argument about Nietzsche follows a similar pattern: to pit oneself directly against metaphysics still lets metaphysics define the rules of the game, so to speak; it still lets metaphysics be metaphysics, and it confines itself to the non-metaphysical realm which, itself, cannot be understood other than in relation to a (present or absent) metaphysics. So it is that Heidegger identifies Nietzsche’s problem with metaphysics to be (perhaps counterintuitively) his very desire to escape metaphysics for good: “every logic of philosophy, that in any way whatever attempts to climb beyond metaphysics falls back most surely beneath metaphysics” (*GID*, p. 109). The difficulty Heidegger is identifying here is that the very

idea of a clean break, of jumping out of metaphysics with both feet at once, is a meta-physical idea, for the very good reasons that such a gesture (i) leaves metaphysics intact and (ii) repeats the movement of going beyond that is characteristic of metaphysics itself.

This leaves Nietzsche with a dilemma. It is the dilemma faced by any attempt to break decisively from metaphysics and it is summed up by Heidegger in three compact and illuminating sentences:

If God in the sense of the Christian god has disappeared from his authoritative position in the suprasensory world, then this authoritative place itself is still always preserved, even though as that which has become empty. The now-empty authoritative realm of the supra-sensory and the ideal world can still be adhered to. What is more, the empty place demands to be occupied anew and to have the god now vanished from it replaced by something else. (*GID*, p. 69)

This is a dilemma for the anti-metaphysician because if, on the one hand, she simply excises God from the world, she is left with an “infinite abyss” which “can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object,” to borrow from Pascal (1966, p.75). God is conspicuous by his absence: his place has become vacant but – like an empty chair at the head of a banqueting table – it is still his place, and so his absence still exerts a controlling influence on philosophy. However, in the final sentence quoted above Heidegger argues that, if the anti-metaphysician seeks to palliate this aching absence by putting something else in the place of the absent God, something to play the role of providing the ground of truth and being the arbiter of goodness, then she has succeeded only in swapping one god for another.

In the discussions that follow I propose to call the first of these predicaments “ascetic atheism,” and the second “imitative atheism.”⁷ Ascetic atheism denies that there is any content to the supra-sensual, but maintains the division of sensory/suprasensory as such. Finding itself confined to the sensory it feels that it has to deny to itself the goodness, truth, and beauty previously found in the suprasensory, and it mourns their absence. As for imitative atheism, it also denies the existence of God but puts something else in the place of the absent deity, preserving the metaphysical structure characteristic of theism but changing the labels on theism’s metaphysical categories. In its crassest form it fills the divine role with an ersatz deity such as “humanity” or “reason,” but it could also imitate less immediately obvious aspects of theism, such as religious faith, divine providence, miracles, or a final and authoritative judgment. We will now follow the fortunes of these two atheisms in the disagreement between Jean-Paul Sartre and Michel Foucault in the mid-twentieth century.

Sartre and Foucault

Despite their common activism,⁸ Sartre and Foucault were, it is safe to say, not the best of philosophical friends. For the existentialist, Foucault was “the last barricade the bourgeoisie can erect against Marx” (1966, pp. 87–96, cited in Smart 1994, p.168 [my translation]) and a thinker whose account of historical change “replaces cinema with a magic lantern, movement with a succession of static images” (cited in Smart 1994, p.67).

Foucault, in turn and for reasons that will soon become clear, sarcastically christened Sartre “the last great philosopher of the nineteenth century” (1966, pp. 540–504). One of their important controversies turns on the most consistent way to follow through on philosophical atheism.

In his 1946 lecture “Existentialism is a Humanism,” Sartre considers there to be two sorts of existentialist: “There are, on the one hand, the Christians ... ; and on the other the existential atheists, amongst whom we must place Heidegger as well as the French existentialists and myself” (2001, p. 27). The humanism that Sartre sets forth in the lecture, then, is an atheist humanism, at least by his own reckoning. In Sartre’s atheism, humanity strives towards the (impossible) condition of the divine, as he explains in *Being and Nothingness*: “Every human reality is a passion in that it projects losing itself so as to found being and by the same stroke to constitute the in-itself, which escapes contingency by being its own foundation, the *Ens causa sui*, which religions call God” (1984, p. 615).

Foucault denounces this Sartrean account of humanity as what we are calling an “imitative atheism,” arguing that Sartre’s “man as the subject of his own consciousness or freedom” is “a kind of correlative image of God” and “God incarnated in humanity” (Lotringer 1996, p. 53). What Sartre offers us, for Foucault, is a “theologizing of man” (*ibid.*), and there is a fundamental contradiction in Sartre’s putatively atheistic thought when he seeks to have done with God while, at the same time, introducing a figure of the human heavily indebted to its divine archetype.

In his own writings, Foucault thinks that atheism has implications for humanity that are more radical than Sartre is willing to admit: if we hold to the death of God then we must also acknowledge the death or end of man, for the figure of the human current in modern thought is just as metaphysical as the deity after which it is fashioned. To affirm atheism while retaining a notion of humanity as its own foundation would be a position in contradiction with itself, the philosophical equivalent of having one’s cake and eating it too. So in the same way that Nietzsche’s madman warns his onlookers of the consequences of their own actions, the Foucault of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* admonishes the adherents of the death of God with the warning that “you may have killed God beneath the weight of all that you have said; but don’t imagine that, with all that you are saying, you will make a man that will live longer than he” (Foucault 1972, p. 211).

This refusal of an idolatrous figure of “man” does not leave Foucault immune from the charge that his thought is theological, however. Critic James Bernauer (2004, p.88), for example, argues that “Foucault’s thought may be regarded as a modern form of negative theology, his effort to overcome that figure of man whom modernity fashioned as a substitute for the Absolute, and whose quasi-divinization entailed a flight from humanity.” Catholic thinker Maurice Clavel reads Foucault’s death of man as Heidegger reads Nietzsche’s death of God, arguing that Foucault is despatching an idol in order that the “divine God” can step forth. For Clavel, the death of man in Foucault’s *The Order of Things* is merely “the death of man without God” (1975, pp. 132–133, my translation). To mention just one further example of a theologizing interpretation of Foucault, we might think of the often reported and frankly amusing exchange between Foucault and eminent sociologist Robert Bellah. In the course of the interview, Foucault insists that it is hope, not despair, that drives his work, at which point the following exchange ensues.

Robert Bellah, one of the interviewers, points out to Foucault that his response sounds remarkably Christian. Without bristling or apologizing, Foucault admits, “Yes, I have a very strong Christian, Catholic background, and I am not ashamed.” Foucault, the atheist, acknowledges without embarrassment his Catholic heritage and indeed welcomes discussing how others have identified him as a “pseudo-Christian.” Yet he does not understand why this particular description of hope is Christian. Bellah explains: “Because you don’t absolutize that hope, in terms of some notion that you’re going to control history and create paradise on earth. You know that any gain can only be relative.” Still baffled, Foucault asks with a note of surprise, “That’s Christian?” “Yes,” says Bellah, “being pessimistic without being hopeless.”⁹

Here Foucault is accused of being an imitative atheist not because his hope is absolute and metaphysical, but precisely because it is not. Faced with this sort of critique, what is an atheist to do? The would-be atheist finds himself – if you will pardon the expression – damned if he does and damned if he doesn’t. If he affirms an absolute, teleological hope then he is being metaphysical, and if he asserts a more modest, relative hope then it seems that he is, once more, open to the charge of being Christian. It is not my purpose here to pronounce a verdict on the various theological and quasi-theological readings of Foucault, and that work has in large part been completed by others already.¹⁰ My point is the more modest one of showing that it is no easy thing for a would-be post-modern atheist to escape the charge of theological complicity.

Badiou, Nancy, and Derrida

One important recent attempt to break with these difficulties and affirm once and for all an atheism not haunted by the ghosts of negative theology or “pseudo-Christianity” is to be found in the work of Alain Badiou. Certainly not a postmodern himself, Badiou’s atheism is illuminating both as a counterpoint to the postmodern atheisms discussed in this chapter and also for the way in which it is critiqued from a broadly postmodern perspective by philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy. Bringing Badiou and Nancy into dialogue will allow us to see that, if not everything is religious, then for much of postmodern thought atheism certainly is.

In recent years, the question of atheism has been brought to the forefront of European philosophical debate through the publication of Jean-Luc Nancy’s two-volume *Deconstruction of Christianity* (2008a; 2012) and Badiou’s claim that his own philosophy is “the most rigorously materialist in ambition that we’ve seen since Lucretius” (1994, p. 123). Badiou’s atheism is categorical: “There is no God” (2001, p.25) and “I take the formula ‘God is dead’ literally. ... God is finished. And religion is finished, too” (2006, p. 23). For Badiou, a rigorous atheism (as opposed to a noncommittal agnosticism) must be able to guard against all the ways in which a deity could be smuggled into an otherwise godless system of thought. Such an atheistic philosophy must have access to all of reality; there must be no “sacred” or “mystical” realm beyond its purview. The way in which Badiou seeks to make sure that nothing is inaccessible to rational thought is by secularizing the infinite, for as long as humanity is considered finite and God alone actually infinite, atheism can never be secured against the God who might always lie beyond humanity’s finite comprehension. Badiou warns that: “The idea that, in order

to understand the human condition, we must first of all make reference to its finitude, keeps the infinite at an evanescent and sacred distance and makes it akin to a vision of being that remains theological" (2011, p. 172, my translation).

Finitude always leaves room for God, such that "[w]e do not have the wherewithal to be atheists so long as the theme of finitude governs our thinking" (Badiou 2004a, p. 26). Importantly, Badiou considers that secularizing the infinite in this way will not only eliminate the God of metaphysics but also Heidegger's "truly divine God," the God of the poets.

Badiou secularizes the infinite through a recourse to mathematics. According to mathematician Georg Cantor's notion of the transfinite, the infinite is ubiquitous, plural and banal, not transcendent, all-encompassing and the preserve of deity. Everything is infinite, and finitude is exceptional and odd. In the context of Cantor's secularized infinity there is no longer anywhere for God to lurk beyond the reach of reason and mathematics, and so "the thesis of the infinity of being is necessarily post-Christian" (Badiou 2007, p. 143).

This rupture from finitism must, for Badiou, take the form of a clean break: the "matheme" of philosophy must decisively break from the "mytheme" of opinion and superstition. Badiou describes his recourse to mathematics in terms redolent of a crusade: "it is by donning the contemporary matheme like a coat of armour that I have undertaken, alone at first, to undo the disastrous consequences of philosophy's 'linguistic turn'; to demarcate philosophy from phenomenological religiosity" (2004a, p. 16–17). Furthermore, in order to break decisively with the historical flux of myth and conjecture that always leaves a door open for God to sneak back in, Badiou insists that philosophy must be understood ahistorically: it is philosophy which judges history, he insists, and not the reverse (2008, p. 5).

Such is Badiou's anti-postmodern atheism: nothing is inaccessible to reason; the infinite is banal, ubiquitous, and secular; the matheme must break cleanly from the mytheme; philosophy is not subject to the tribunal of history. It is a bold attempt to secure an atheism of unprecedented completeness and rigor. Nevertheless, a post-modern critique of Badiou's position would argue that it is far less consistently atheistic than its own declarations would indicate. This is certainly the case for Jean-Luc Nancy, who sees in atheisms like Badiou's a mirror image of the theism of which Badiou is seeking to rid himself.

For Nancy, Badiou's atheism is complicit with theism when it claims that an ahistorical, mathematical philosophy breaks definitively from myth and superstition. From a Nancean point of view, Badiou's rupture of the matheme from the mytheme borrows the metaphysical shape of Christ's incarnation: the ahistorical suddenly breaks into the flow of history in a way that exceeds its usual relations of cause and effect. Nancy calls this gesture the "Christmas projection": "a pure and simple birth of Christianity, which one fine day comes along and changes everything" (2008a, p. 145). It is in repeating this "Christmas projection" that the West remains Christian: "Our whole tradition, as unchristian as it would like to be, still retains something of the 'Christmas projection': at a given moment 'that' takes place, and we find ourselves thereafter in a Christmas condition (*ibid.*).

Badiou's account of philosophy's ahistorical condition, crucial as it is for his attempt to remain true to the death of God, is in Nancy's eyes just such a Christmas projection,

for it suggests that, at a given moment, the matheme interrupts the mytheme: “that” takes place, and philosophy is born. For Nancy, then, the way in which Badiou seeks to be faithful to the proposition “God is dead” falls back into the very metaphysics from which it is seeking to extricate itself. So where can postmodern thought – in this immediate context, Nancy’s thought – go from here? How can it faithfully follow through on the consequences of the death of God if categorical atheism itself is theological? That is, in part, the question to which Nancy’s own deconstruction of Christianity seeks to offer a response.

Nancy elaborates his deconstruction of Christianity against the background of what he calls onto-(a)-theology,¹¹ a term which concatenates metaphysical theism and metaphysical atheism, “those two faces of the same Western Janus” (Nancy 2008a, p.18, translation altered). If onto-(a)-theology captures Nancy’s wariness of imitative atheism, then he is also on his guard against ascetic atheism, a danger which he names “absentheism.” Absentheism understands atheism as a lack, trapped in a state of constant mourning for the absent deity. The question for Nancy, then, is how to think atheism otherwise than as onto-(a)-theology or as absentheism, or in other words how to be “seriously, absolutely, unconditionally atheist” (2003, p.23).

Such a serious atheism cannot simply take the form of a wholesale rejection of theism because, as we have seen in the case of Badiou, this gesture relies on theistic moves to overcome theism. It will not prove possible to escape theism with both feet at once. What Nancy does instead is embrace the entanglement of theism and atheism and show how religion itself has at its heart the resources for its own self-surpassing, namely “the gesture of “returning to the sources” and of a “purification” of the origin, which is the obsession of Christianity, monotheism, and the West” (2008a, p. 58, translation altered). The history and prehistory of Western Christianity is a series of such purifications, moving from the pagan pantheon through Hebrew monotheism to Jesus Christ the man-God abandoned by God. Each stage, Nancy maintains, is a secularizing move (from many gods to one, and from a transcendent God to an immanent and then to a dead God). The secularizing continues with the Protestant Reformation’s demythologizing of Catholicism and its banishing even the presence of Christ in the Eucharistic host. Modern secularization is simply a further move in this same Judeo-Christian direction.

The trajectory of Christianity itself is therefore not a metaphysical move of passing beyond everyday reality to another world, but one of opening the truth of this world (Nancy 2012, p.28). Only this gesture of opening, which Nancy calls the becoming-atheist of Christianity (2012, p. 29), can avoid the Christmas projection of overcoming metaphysics through a metaphysical gesture, or of opposing itself to theism as its opposite and thereby underwriting theism’s conceptual control of atheism.

As well as following Christianity’s own secularizing logic, Nancy seeks to recover from its religious trappings something in Christianity deeper than Christianity itself: “It is necessary to extract from Christianity what bore us and produced us: it is necessary, if possible, to extract from a ground deeper than the ground of the religious thing [*la chose religieuse*] that of which religion will have been a form and a misrecognition [*méconnaissance*]” (2012, p.26).

God is only the “front man,” Nancy insists (2012, p.20, translation altered), for a pure excess of the world and of existence. Once more, Nancy’s strategy here is not to oppose himself to theism but to show that (Western, Christian) theism itself is the royal

road to atheism. In sum, Christianity for Nancy is “the religion of the egress from religion” (2008a, p. 146),¹² the religion that follows a trajectory of secularization. So Nancy’s “deconstruction of Christianity” means two things: “both an analysis of Christianity—from a position supposedly capable of moving beyond it—and Christianity’s own movement beyond itself, with modifications, debasing itself as it gives access to resources that it covers and uncovers at the same time” (2008b, p. 108 n4, translation heavily altered). Whereas Badiou attacks theism from the outside, Nancy exhausts and moves beyond Christianity with one foot inside it, and all in the name of a serious, absolute, and unconditional atheism.

Is Nancy’s strategy, however, as convincing as all that? It is all very well to look to religion itself for the means of overcoming religion, but does Nancy not run the great risk of finding that, after all, his embrace of the trajectory of Western Christianity turns out to be, well, an embrace of Christianity? Surely following the logic of Christianity—even if it is a logic that approximates ever more closely to atheism—is a rather dangerous strategy for a putatively atheistic thought. Is such an approach not perpetually at risk of tumbling over into imitative atheism? This is precisely the charge that Derrida (2005) lays at Nancy’s door. I quote at length:

Just as it is neither enough to present oneself as a Christian nor to “believe” or “believe oneself to be a Christian” in order to hold forth in a language that is “authentically” Christian, likewise it is not enough not to “believe” or believe oneself and declare oneself non-Christian in order to utter a discourse, speak a language, and even inhabit one’s body while remaining safely sheltered from all Christianity. This is not about being free of harm, safe, and saved, seeking one’s salvation or immunity outside of Christianity. These values would still be Christian ones. That is why, as I have suggested on several occasions, even if there were any sense to or necessity for it, the “deconstruction of Christianity” that Nancy has announced seems such a difficult, paradoxical, almost impossible task, always in danger of being exposed as mere Christian hyperbole. (2005, p. 20)

The first half of this quotation rehearses an argument with which we are now familiar from our discussion of Heidegger, Foucault, and Nancy himself: to profess atheism does not in itself secure a position free from theological contamination. In fact, the surest way to open oneself to theological contamination is to seek to be “free of harm, safe, and saved” from Christianity, to seek salvation from it, for to do so would be to seek to be free of theology by means of a quintessentially theological flourish. The second half of this quotation, however, cautions not against a two-footed escape from theism but against Nancy’s more cautious, asymptotic approach of following Christianity along its own secularizing path, an approach which can never immunize itself against being caught up in the logic of salvation, for the very good reason that such an immunization would itself be an example of the logic of salvation. At what point does following Christianity’s own logic tip over from seeking “something in Christianity deeper than Christianity itself,” to being indistinguishable from Christianity? It is impossible to tell in advance, and impossible to be unambiguously free from the prospect of such an eventuality. That is why Derrida warns that Nancy’s deconstruction of Christianity is “always in danger of being exposed as mere Christian hyperbole” (2005, p.20).

Given this caution against repeating a theological gesture in the very effort to disengage from theology, Derrida is very circumspect in the way he treats atheism in his own work. His famous comment "I rightly pass for an atheist" (1993, p.155) seeks to avoid falling into the metaphysics which characterizes dogmatic theism and dogmatic atheism alike. Categorically to claim either theism or atheism would be to choose one face of the same two-sided metaphysical coin, and while this by no means leaves Derrida in a position of non-committal agnosticism it does mean that his atheism cannot be the subject of direct and unqualified affirmation. Derrida dismisses such categorical atheism as a "negative atheology" (2001, p.375), the concave of dogmatic theism's convex and the celebration of the absence (as opposed to the celebration of the presence) of God at the center of existence. Whether it is God's presence or absence that is celebrated makes little difference for Derrida; what matters is that in both theism and atheism the focus remains on the center of things, and that itself is theological.

Nevertheless, Derrida's own thought follows a movement close to Nancy's "something in X deeper than X" in his repeated recourse to the trope of "X without X": "religion without religion," "God without God," "messianicity without messianism." Let us examine the last of these three examples. Derrida identifies a series of religious and secular messianisms in the history of the West, notably the Jewish expectation of the future-coming Yahweh's anointed one (*mashiach*) who will overthrow the enemies of God's people and who will reign in peace and justice. A secular variation on this religious theme is orthodox Marxism, according to which the proletariat will overthrow the enemies of the people and bring in a classless society of freedom and equality.

In terms of his own thinking what Derrida offers is not one more determinate messianism (be it of a religious or secular kind) but what he calls "messianicity without messianism," a "structural messianism" or again a messianism "which I regard as a universal structure of experience, and which cannot be reduced to religious messianism of any stripe" (1999, p. 248). He seeks to maintain an expectation of a future overturning of the status quo (hence "messianicity") while refusing to ascribe that change to any determinate agent (hence "without messianism"). Derrida retains the structure of the promise of something to come, without the knowledge that anything in particular has come or necessarily will come. The promise points forward not to any named Messiah but to "the most irreducibly heterogeneous otherness" (1999, p.249) which means that whatever it is that may come, it will certainly not be what, or who, we are expecting. As for the state of affairs that this advent will bring about, Derrida describes it as the "democracy to come," by which he does not mean the future continuation of contemporary systems of parliamentary and representative democracy but a disruptive, non-linear "event" bringing about equality and freedom in a way which is currently unforeseeable and unexpected.

It is worth taking a moment to ask how Derrida's own thought at this point is different to the "Christian hyperbole" he warns against in Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity. Like Nancy, he finds in religion an abiding structure of messianicity that can be lifted from its determinate content of messianisms. How is this move from determinate content to indeterminate structure not, in its turn, a repetition of the (Protestant) Christian move of purification? Or, put another way, is Derrida not in turn taking a path that risks at any moment revealing itself to have been Christian all along?

Derrida's thought has left a divided legacy on the question of atheism, neatly summed up in the two figures of John D. Caputo and Martin Hägglund. Caputo is to Derrida as Heidegger is to Nietzsche in the sense that, for Caputo, Derrida's deconstruction of the God of metaphysics opens the way for a sort of "divine God," an indeterminate, oblique, post-secular theology of hope, peace, and openness to the other. "The heart of Derrida's religion," Caputo maintains, is "the call for justice, a democracy, a just one to come, a call for peace among the concrete messianisms, issuing from a neo-*Aufklärer*, looking for a (post-secular) religion within the limits of (a certain) reason alone (almost)" (1997, p. xxvi). While Caputo's Derrida does indeed "'quite rightly pass for an atheist' with respect to the orthodox faiths," he nevertheless "has an 'absolved, absolutely private language' in which he speaks of God all the time" (1997, p. xxviii).

This reading of Derrida has received a vigorous challenge in recent years, most notably in Martin Hägglund's (2008) *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life*. For Hägglund, Caputo's post-secular Derrida is a grave misunderstanding of the philosopher who insisted that "[i]nfinite alterity as death cannot be reconciled with infinite alterity as positivity and presence (God). Metaphysical transcendence cannot be at once transcendence towards the other as death and transcendence towards the other as God" (2001, p. 144). Hägglund finds in Derrida's thought a way of overcoming the ascetic atheism which sees mortal being as a lack, and to this end radical atheism "does not pursue an external critique of religious concepts, but rather seeks to read these concepts *against themselves*, thereby unearthing their atheological and irreligious condition of possibility" (2014, p. 144). If this sounds like Nancy's "something in X deeper than X" then that is because there is indeed a likeness, and Hägglund's radical atheism is open to the same probing accusation of Christian hyperbole which Derrida raises against Nancy in *On Touching* (2005).

Conclusions

So what should we make of the relationship between postmodernism and atheism? Four things. First, postmodernism makes us rethink the relation between theism and atheism. If we are accustomed to seeing theism and atheism as the two ends of a spectrum with agnosticism somewhere in the middle, then thinkers like Heidegger, Foucault, Nancy, and Derrida will seek to persuade us that this understanding is simplistic and self-deceived. Categorical theism and categorical atheism are minor variations on the same metaphysical theme, both equally entangled in theological assumptions. Secondly, postmodern thinkers are aware of two distinct dangers for atheistic thought, which in this chapter I have called "imitative" and "ascetic" atheism. To the extent that a particular thinker seeks to avoid one of these, s/he is in greater danger of falling prey to the other. Thirdly, postmodern thinkers challenge our understanding of what it means to think atheistically. Simply disavowing all religion and seeking to make a clean break from God is an approach that distances itself from theism at the level of its content only to align itself with theism at the level of its structure or what we might call its intellectual "moves." "Atheism" itself, as a straightforward denial of God's existence, can be construed as a theological move that seeks the help of God to free it from God. Another way of putting this would be to say that theism should be understood adverbially as well

as nominally: one can be an atheist theistically. Fourthly, it is important not to forget, in the midst of these complexities, that Foucault calls himself “a total atheist” (Mauriac 1986, p. 226, cited in Macey 2004, p. 130), Nancy affirms that he is seeking a “radical atheism,” and Derrida does, after all, insist that “I rightly pass for an atheist.” In other words, it is not that these postmodern thinkers have abandoned atheism in favor of some watered-down, fence-sitting agnosticism. It is that they understand that what is at stake in following through on the consequences of the death of God is complex and much deeper than a profession of unbelief. They understand that in order to do justice to the death of the God of metaphysics we must wrestle with the metaphysics of the death of God.

Notes

- 1 For the purposes of this chapter I shall understand “postmodern” philosophies as those loosely related mid- and late twentieth patterns of thought influenced by Nietzsche, Freud and Marx, broadly characterized by a mistrust of metaphysics and a refusal of ahistorical understandings of truth, and which accorded a prominent place to difference as opposed to unity and identity.
- 2 The parable comprises section 125 of Nietzsche (2001: 119–20). For his critique, see Heidegger (1977), hereafter *GID*.
- 3 A comprehensive account would need to discuss at least Lucretius, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, Sade, Bataille and Blanchot. The reader interested in the genealogy of postmodern atheism will find much illuminating material in Geroulanos (2010).
- 4 As well its appearance in §125 of *The Gay Science* (Nietzsche 2001), Nietzsche treats the death of God in §343, and in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Nietzsche 1999).
- 5 The lecture, though delivered in 1943, was first published in 1950 in *Holzwege*.
- 6 Heidegger clarifies: “God, the suprasensory world as the world that truly is and determines all, ideals and Ideas, the purposes and grounds that determine and support everything that is and human life in particular – all this is here represented as meaning the highest values. In conformity with the opinion that is even now still current, we understand by this the true, the good, and the beautiful; the true, i.e., that which really is; the good, i.e., that upon which everything everywhere depends; the beautiful, i.e., the order and unity of that which is in its entirety” (*GID*, p. 66).
- 7 I treat these terms in greater detail in Watkin (2011).
- 8 Readers may recall the famous images of Foucault and Sartre campaigning together on behalf of Arab immigrants at la Goulotte d’Or, Paris, November 1971.
- 9 The interview is contained in an unpublished document in the Foucault archive in University of California, Berkley (document D250 (7)). I quote the account of the document given by Schuld (2003, p. 1).
- 10 Jeremy Carrette, for example, questions Bernauer’s negative theological reading of Foucault (Carrette 2000, p. xi).
- 11 See, for example, Nancy (2008a: 20).
- 12 Nancy borrows this term from Gauchet (1999).

References

- Badiou, A. (1994) "Being by numbers: Lauren Sedovsky talks with Alain Badiou." *ArtForum International* 33: 84–87, 118, 123–124.
- Badiou, A. (2001) *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*. London: Verso.
- Badiou, A. (2004a) *Theoretical Writings*, ed. and trans. R. Brassier, and A. Toscano. London: Continuum.
- Badiou, A. (2004b) "Mathematics and philosophy: The grand style and the little style," in Brassier and Toscano (2004), pp. 103–118.
- Badiou, A. (2006) *Briefings on Existence: A Short Treatise on Transitory Ontology*, trans. N. Madarasz. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Badiou, A. (2007) *Being and Event*, trans. O. Feltham. London: Continuum.
- Badiou, A. (2008) *Conditions*, trans. S. Corcoran. London: Continuum.
- Badiou, A. (2011) *Entretiens 1, 1981–1996*. Paris: Noûs.
- Bernauer, J. (2004) "Michel Foucault's philosophy of religion: An introduction to the non-fascist life," in J. Bernauer and J. Carrette (eds.) *Michel Foucault and Theology: The Politics of Religious Experience*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Caputo, J. (1997) *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Carrette, J. (2000) *Foucault and Religion: Spiritual Corporality and Political Spirituality*. London: Routledge.
- Derrida, J. (1993) "Circumfession," in G. Bennington and J. Derrida (eds.) *Jacques Derrida*, trans. G. Bennington. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Derrida, J. (1999) "Marx and sons," in M. Sprinker (ed.) *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's Spectres of Marx*. London: Verso.
- Derrida, J. (2001) *Writing and Difference*, trans. A. Bass. London: Routledge.
- Derrida, J. (2005) *On Touching: Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. C. Irizarry. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Foucault, M. (1966) "L'Homme est-il Morte?," in *Dits et Écrits, Vol. 1, 1954–1975*, Paris: Gallimard.
- Foucault, M. (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. M. Sheridan-Smith. New York: Pantheon.
- Gauchet, M. (1999) *The Disenchantment of the World*, trans. O. Burge. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Geroulanos, S. (2010) *An Atheism that is not Humanist Emerges in French Thought*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Hägglund, M. (2008) *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Hägglund, M. (2014) "Derrida's radical atheism," in Z. Diarek and L. Lawlor (eds.) *Companion to Derrida*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, pp. 166–178.
- Heidegger, M. (1969) "The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics," trans. J. Stambaugh, in *Identity and Difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Heidegger, M. (1977) "The Word of Nietzsche: God is Dead," in W. Lovitt (ed. and trans.) *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, pp. 53–112.
- Hölderlin, F. (2008) *Odes and Elegies*, ed. and trans. N. Hoff. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Lotringer, S. (ed.) (1996) *Foucault Live (Interviews, 1961–1984)*, 2nd edn. New York: Semiotext(e).
- Macey, D. (2004) *Michel Foucault*. London: Reaktion.
- Mauriac, C. (1986) *Mauriac et Fils*. Paris: Grasset.

- Nancy, J-L. (2003) "The confronted community." *Postcolonial Studies* 6: 23–36.
- Nancy, J-L. (2008a) *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*, trans. G. Malenfant, B. Bergo, and M. Smith. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Nancy, J-L. (2008b) *Noli me Tangere: On the Raising of the Body*, trans. P-A Brault, S. Clift, and M. Nass. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Nancy, J-L. (2012) *Adoration: The Deconstruction of Christianity II*, trans. J. McKeane. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Nietzsche, F. (1968) *The Will to Power*, ed. W. Kaufmann, trans. W. Kaufmann and R. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage.
- Nietzsche, F. (1999) *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, trans. T. Common. New York: Dover Publications.
- Nietzsche, F. (2001) *The Gay Science*, ed. B. Williams, trans. J. Nauckhoff. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Original work published 1882 (trans. 1887).
- Nietzsche, F. (2005) *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and other Writings*, ed. A. Ridley and J. Norman, trans. J. Norman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pascal, B. (1966) *Pensées*, trans. and introd. by A. Krailsheimer. New York: Penguin. Original work published 1670.
- Sartre, J-P. (1966) "Jean-Paul Sartre Répond." *L'Arc* 30: 87–96.
- Sartre, J-P. (1984) *Being and Nothingness*, trans. H. Barnes. New York: Washington Square Press.
- Sartre, J-P. (2001) "Existentialism is a humanism," in S. Priest (ed.) *Jean-Paul Sartre: Basic Writings*. London: Routledge. Original work published 1946.
- Schuld, J. (2003) *Foucault and Augustine: Reconsidering Power and Love*. Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press.
- Smart, B. (ed.) (1994) *Michel Foucault: Critical Assessments*, Vol. 1. London: Routledge.
- Watkin, C. (2011) *Difficult Atheism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Naturalism

ERIC STEINHART

Naturalism is crucial to many debates about God. Among the many different ways of defining naturalism, there are two main categories. The first is *dogmatic*, which tries to define nature or naturalness according to some fixed rule. The second is *progressive*, which views naturalism as a dynamical research program without any fixed doctrines about nature or naturalness. In this chapter, after a brief review of its many well-known problems, dogmatic naturalism is set aside in favor of progressive naturalism.

Progressive naturalism is open-minded – it doesn't reject any concept because of its history. It is open to strings and souls, supersymmetries and spirits. It demands only that every concept participates in a certain kind of research program, commonly found in the sciences. Some ways of defining souls and spirits can be naturalized, while others cannot. Some gods are more natural than others. The demands of progressive naturalism are minimal. But many concepts associated with the old religions have persistently failed to meet even those minimal demands. Progressive naturalists are extremely skeptical about the old religions. But progressive naturalism is dynamic. Progressive naturalists welcome efforts to build new religious and spiritual naturalisms.

Dogmatic and Progressive Naturalism

A *dogmatic approach to naturalism* proceeds by defining nature and then defending that definition. The definition is a *theory* of nature. The first problem with the dogmatic approach is that it is held hostage to its origins. It therefore runs the risk of running contrary to scientific progress.¹ It risks degenerating into an ideology.

Suppose John defines naturalism like this:

A naturalist asserts that nature was created by God according to the story in Genesis.

For a long time, this was our most scientific cosmology. But as science made progress, it began to challenge that cosmology. So either John defends the Genesis myth against science or John abandons naturalism.

Suppose David defines naturalism like this:

Nature is just our physical universe.²

But many physical theories since his time have argued for the existence of many other universes.³ So either David has to fight against those scientific theories or he has to abandon his naturalism.

Suppose Hartry defines naturalism like this:

Nature contains only concrete objects.⁴

But some physicists have argued that all concrete things really are identical with purely mathematical abstract objects.⁵ So now Hartry either fights against this new physics or he sacrifices his naturalism.

A dogmatist might say that these historical troubles can be avoided by more sophisticated theories of nature. Unfortunately, those sophistications run into their own problems. Suppose Susan aims to avoid historical problems by defining naturalism like this:

A naturalist says nature is defined by our best current science.

This means that nature changes as science changes; but that is implausible. Finally, Liz aims to avoid all these troubles by defining naturalism like this:

A naturalist says that nature is defined by our ideal final scientific theory.⁶

Sadly, nobody knows anything about this allegedly perfect scientific theory. So this eschatological naturalism is vacuous.

Dogmatic naturalism suffers because it views naturalism as a *doctrine*. But there is no need to think of naturalism as a doctrine. A *progressive approach to naturalism* regards naturalism as a *research program*.⁷ As a research program, naturalism strives to *naturalize* all domains of human thought and activity. A progressive naturalist works to replace less natural theories and practices with more natural theories and practices. Progressive naturalists go wherever our most natural theories go; they follow theoretical naturalness wherever it leads. If science shows someday that nature is ultimately made of little souls (like Leibnizian monads), then the progressive naturalist won't fight against that science. The progressive naturalist has no unshakable *faith* in any fixed theory of nature. Nature always remains open to further exploration.

Naturalness is a Property of Theories

A dogmatic naturalist says naturalness *is a property of things*. For example, material particles are natural while immaterial ghosts or gods are not; physical things involved in causal interactions are natural while mathematical objects not involved in them are not. But progressive naturalists do not tie naturalness to things. They say naturalness *is a property of theories*. Theories are more or less natural, and so can be compared in terms of their naturalness. For example, the oxygen theory of combustion is more natural than the phlogiston theory; evolution by natural selection is more natural than intelligent design; the predicate calculus is more natural than Aristotelian logic.

The naturalness of any term in a theory is the naturalness of the theory in which it is defined. So if the oxygen theory of combustion is more natural than the phlogiston theory, then the term 'oxygen' is more natural than the term 'phlogiston'. Ancient Taoist creation theories are said to posit a *Cosmic Egg* as an original object. If the Big Bang theory is more natural than the Taoist creation theories, then the term 'Big Bang' is more natural than 'Cosmic Egg'. Since the terms in any theory inherit their naturalness from the theory, all the terms which come from the same theory are equally natural. For example, quantum field theories have terms which appear to refer to particles, forces, fields, space-time points, functions, vectors, numbers, and so on. All those terms are equally natural. In quantum field theories, the terms which apparently refer to numbers are just as natural as terms which seem to refer to material particles.

A progressive naturalist believes that every attempt to define nature produces a theory of nature. By interacting with nature as parts of nature ourselves, we produce theories of nature. We can study the logical and linguistic features of our theories. We can compare newer theories with older theories. We can study the ways that theories evolve. For example, we can discuss the evolution of physical theories from the ancient Greeks to modern string theories. But we cannot directly compare our theories with nature. We cannot measure the degree to which a theory truly describes nature. Since we cannot directly compare our theories with nature, the naturalness of any theory cannot be an *extrinsic* feature of the theory. It cannot be any *semantic* feature of the theory.

Since the naturalness of any theory does not depend on its semantics, it does not depend on *truth*. False theories can be as natural as true theories. As an illustration of this point, consider our two best current physical theories, quantum mechanics and general relativity. They are mutually contradictory. At least one of them is false; both are probably false. But so what? On the progressive view of naturalism, both of those theories turn out to be highly natural regardless of their truth-values. Progressive naturalists, of course, do not accept false theories. But they do recognize that later and more highly accurate theories often include ideas from false theories.

Since the naturalness of any theory does not depend on its semantics, it does not depend on the *degree of confirmation* of the theory. Poorly confirmed theories can be just as natural as well confirmed theories. After all, confirmation requires us to run experiments; but our experiments are constrained by our technologies. It might be technologically impossible to test the theories that aim to reconcile relativity with quantum mechanics. We might never be able to build scientific instruments powerful enough to

test those theories. We might never have any confirmation for those theories. And yet those unconfirmed theories may be extremely natural.

Naturalness is tied neither to verification nor to falsification. Progressive naturalism rejects positivism. If naturalness requires some confirmation, then naturalness is dogmatically tied to empiricism. But scientific progress might refute empiricism. The physics that aims to reconcile quantum mechanics with relativity is almost purely mathematical. Suppose it turns out that, starting only from purely formal first principles, pure reason deduces some elegant theory which later turns out to be maximally well confirmed. Empirical evidence played no role in the creation of that theory. Its high degree of confirmation turns out to be empirically inexplicable. A progressive naturalist will not reject that elegant theory because it was not inferred from empirical data. A progressive naturalist will say it is a natural theory.

Since the naturalness of any theory does not depend on its semantics, progressive naturalism is *agnostic about existence*. Our most natural theory of reality may or may not be true; hence the objects to which it refers may or may not exist. Progressive naturalism asserts only that *if* the terms defined in some theory refer, *then* the things to which they do refer are just as natural as their defining theory. If the variables and names refer to things, then they refer to natural things; if the predicates refer to properties and relations, then they refer to natural properties and natural relations.

Naturalness and Formalization

Since the naturalness of any theory cannot be any extrinsic feature of that theory, it must be some intrinsic feature of the theory. Since naturalness cannot be any semantic feature of a theory, it must be one of the syntactic features of the theory. So one can evaluate the naturalness of any theory just by looking at it or just by comparing it with other theories. Here progressive naturalists look at the historical development of the various fields of human inquiry. What intrinsic or syntactic features go with progress across many fields of inquiry? One feature stands out right away.

As any field of inquiry makes progress in solving its problems, its theories become more precisely formalized. They use more and more mathematics. It may well be that mathematics is a grand illusion. But the increasing use of mathematics in physics is a fact. The same fact occurs in the other natural sciences (such as chemistry, biology, and psychology): as they make progress, they become more mathematical.

If this observation is correct, it suggests a hypothesis: *the naturalness of a theory is its degree of formalization*. Theories are more or less formal. As they become more formal, the definitions of their terms become clearer and the rules for manipulating those terms become clearer. At the height of naturalness, meaning and rules become exact. There is no ambiguity or uncertainty. Naturalization uses *clarity* to dispel *mystery*. As theories become more formal, they become more purely mathematical. But here mathematics is more of like a manner of thinking than like a collection of contents. To mathematize is to clarify; pure mathematics is the clarification of clarity itself.

As an illustration of progressive naturalization, consider the history of physics. A good place to start is with Aristotle; but Aristotelian physics uses very little math. From Aristotle to Newton, the formalization of physical concepts grows slowly. Newton uses

Euclidean geometry and the calculus in his theory of gravity. During the nineteenth century, many physical concepts become formalized by classical mechanics. Quantum mechanics and the relativity theories, born around the start of the twentieth century, lead to intensely mathematical definitions of physical concepts. Concepts like *space*, *time*, *force*, *energy*, *mass*, *charge*, and *matter* all become highly mathematical. They become so highly mathematical that, by the end of the twentieth century, theoretical physics looks more and more like a branch of pure mathematics.

Since more natural theories are more highly mathematized, and since mathematical theories themselves are the most highly mathematized, they are the most natural theories. Does this require you to believe that mathematical objects exist? It does not. Progressive naturalism separates naturalness from existence. It permits you to be a nominalist or a Platonist. The progressive naturalist agnostically says only that *if* some mathematical term in any theory refers to some thing, *then* the thing to which it refers is as natural as the theory. But mathematical terms might fail to refer.

Progressive naturalists seek to naturalize all concepts. They don't dismiss any concept out of hand because of some dogmatic prejudice. To naturalize a concept, you can start with its traditional definitions. You then try to naturalize those. You go with the definitions that are most open to progressive formalization. Consider the *soul*. There are many definitions of the soul. Aristotle said "the soul is the form of the body" (*De Anima*, 412a5–414a33). And this definition can be naturalized. You can bring all the resources of computational biology to bear on the development of highly mathematical theories of the form of the body. Naturalizing the soul is a small research program inside the larger research program of progressive naturalism.

There are many traditional definitions of *God*. Progressive naturalists study these in terms of their openness to naturalization. One definition is easily naturalized. This is the pantheistic definition: God is the All. If the All is just our universe, then God is that; if the All is a plurality of universes, then God is the multiverse; if the All is the totality of mathematical objects, then God is that totality. The *World Pantheist Movement* contains practicing pantheists (Harrison 1999). This way of naturalizing God refutes theism; it shows that all the old theistic religions are wrong about God.

Some Attractive Consequences of Formalism

One way to evaluate a hypothesis is to study its consequences. The hypothesis that equates naturalness with degrees of formalization has some attractive consequences. The first attractive consequence is *empirical testability*. The progressive naturalist argues that greater formalization means greater empirical testability. Informal theories are typically so vague that they cannot be tested. As theories become more formally precise, they become more susceptible to testing through scientific measurement.

The second attractive consequence is *ontological parity*. Some naturalists divide the terms in scientific theories into those that refer and those that fail to refer. For instance, nominalists say that concrete terms refer while abstract terms do not refer. It is probably impossible to defend that division; it is probably impossible to defend any division.⁸ But progressive naturalism does not force you to divide scientific theories. All terms in all theories appear equally in those theories; hence they are treated equally.

The third attractive feature concerns *openness*. Progressive naturalists welcome all asserted objects with open arms. They are open to speculative extensions of science, such as the supersymmetric extensions of the Standard Model of Matter, and all current efforts to reconcile quantum mechanics with relativity. They are open to other possible universes; they are open to purely mathematical objects; they are open to immaterial minds; they are open to spirits of all kinds, from little imps to majestic gods and goddesses. Progressive naturalists say that the naturalness of a goddess is just the degree of mathematization of the theory in which that goddess is defined. And whenever progressive naturalists welcome any asserted object, they seek to naturalize it by formalizing it. You strive to naturalize immaterial minds by formalizing them; you strive to naturalize theology by producing mathematical theories of deities.

The fourth attractive feature concerns *skepticism*. Mathematical existence is just consistency; to exist mathematically is to be consistently definable; hence all consistently definable concepts have mathematical models (Balaguer, 1998, pp. 5–9). Conversely, if some concept cannot be formalized, then it has no mathematical models; but then it is not consistently definable; if it is not consistently definable, then it does not include any existence; it has no content and no instances. This leads to skepticism: if some term perpetually resists formalization, then it probably fails to refer. More generally, if there is no research program which produces an increasingly formalized series of definitions of some term, then it almost certainly fails to refer. And if the progressive formalization of some term ends with some false theory, then that term fails to refer.

For example, if *libertarian free will* cannot be formalized, then it has no consistently definable models; if it has no consistently definable models, then it does not exist. So if there is no research program which produces increasingly mathematical models of free will, then it probably cannot be formalized; if it probably cannot be formalized, then it probably does not exist. Here there can be only probability, since further study of free will might lead to the formalization. But the skepticism remains: if free will persistently resists all formalization, then free will is probably illusory. And if somebody argues that we *cannot* mathematically define some concept, then it is illusory indeed.

Consider some increasingly natural theories of God. The Stoics said God is some subtle matter distributed throughout all space and time (Cicero 2008). Hobbes also affirms this idea (see Gorham 2013). Perhaps this God can be naturalized: God is some sort of force field (Harvie 2011). Mormons say that God is a person with a body of “flesh and bone”; this body resembles a human body; it is subject to natural laws (Givens 2015, Chapter 11). So perhaps the Mormon God is open to naturalization. But a physical God need not have a human shape. Tipler (1995) argued that God is an infinite Turing machine which will emerge in the universe at its end. Since it appears at the end of the universe, it is the *omega point*. This God knows the entire past and will use its knowledge to resurrect our bodies in a software version of an earthly paradise (see Steinhart, 2012). Tipler argues for a digital God and a digital resurrection. Since he defines his ideas with great mathematical clarity, they are highly natural. But this clarity also makes the Tiplerian theology testable. It turns out to be false.⁹

Naturalizing the Abstract Sciences

A naturalist strives to naturalize all fields of human thought. For example, a naturalist strives to naturalize logic, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, epistemology, and theology too. As naturalization proceeds, old concepts will be given new meanings. New concepts may be introduced. And old concepts will be thrown out if they persistently resist all efforts at formalization. We can learn about the naturalistic research program by turning to history.

The field of logic reveals progressive naturalization. From Aristotle to the predicate calculus, it becomes ever more formal. Concepts like *inference*, *quantification*, *truth-value*, and *identity* become formalized. Modal logic likewise reveals progressive naturalization. Concepts like *possibility* and *necessity* become formalized.

At least one definition of God is highly logical. It says God is the abstract ground of concrete being. This definition can be naturalized by treating this ground as a proposition and then analyzing it using deontic logic.¹⁰ This propositional deity is the ultimate sufficient reason for all things. It is the necessary ground of all contingency. Its existence can be justified by a Leibnizian cosmological argument. This logical God is highly natural. It can appear as an element in some *natural theology*. To avoid confusion with other definitions of God, this proposition can just be called the *ground*. The ground might not exist; nevertheless, it is natural.

The ground is ultimately responsible for all concrete things. It explains why there is something rather than nothing. So it has some *creative power* which calls concrete things into being. Its creative power is at least as natural as its truth. And, since its creative power is responsible for concrete things, it is not entirely abstract. Many *religious naturalists* define God as the creativity which brings our universe into being and which is active in every physical thing. So another definition identifies God with this creativity (Kaufman 2000; Peters 2002). According to the Pew Forum (2008: 5), one quarter of Americans affirm that God is an impersonal force or energy.

The idea that God is an impersonal force or energy resembles the idea that God is *spirit*. On the one hand, spirit has often been defined as a kind of ghostly mental stuff; but that stuff resists naturalization; no research program aims to produce mathematical models of ghostly mental stuff. On the other hand, spirit has been defined as a kind of non-mental energy. Hobbes, Descartes, and Newton all thought of spirit as a kind of energetic fluid circulating through physical things.¹¹ This definition of spirit can be made more natural by identifying it with the energy of the ground. Spirit might not exist; but progressive naturalists can define it in increasingly natural ways.

The field of mathematics reveals progressive naturalization. Mathematical notations are rendered precise; the axioms for sets by Zermelo-Fraenkel are more natural than the axioms for wholes by Proclus; the geometrical axioms of Hilbert are more natural than those of Euclid. Concepts like *set*, *number*, *point*, *line*, *continuity*, and *infinity* all become formally defined. Turing naturalizes the concept of *computation* and Shannon naturalizes the concept of *information*. Concepts like *machine*, *rule*, *program*, *data*, and *bit* are formalized. The sciences of information and computation are born.

Another definition of God comes from computer science. Many writers say our universe is a software process running on some hardware substrate (Fredkin 2003).

This hardware substrate is a computer; some say it is God. This is a Spinozistic way of thinking about God. Of course, this cosmic computer is not the Tiplerian God; that Tiplerian God does not exist. This cosmic computer is the *alpha* of all physical things; it is not their omega. The Kalām Cosmological Argument and the Cosmic Design Arguments (e.g., the Fine-Tuning Arguments) support this digital God. Since it is defined computationally, this God is natural. Moravec (1988) says this digital God can monitor everything in the universe; it can intervene in the universe; it can incarnate itself into the universe through an avatar; it can provide us with life after death via bodily resurrection (Steinhart, 2012). Moravec thus argues for a complex *digital theology*, which finds some support among *transhumanists* and *singularitarians*. Digital theology easily incorporates the ground and its energy. The ground is the ultimate sufficient reason for the digital God. And the energy of the ground, which is spirit, powers that digital God and every software object (every physical thing) running on it.

Moravec's digital theology cannot be falsified by showing that our universe is not running on some classical Turing machine (Steinhart 2014, §50). Mathematicians have defined computers far beyond such machines. Computation covers the entire *constructible hierarchy of pure sets*. So Moravec's digital theology would be falsified if our universe has no model in the constructible hierarchy.

Naturalizing the Concrete Sciences

The physical sciences have a long history of progressive naturalization; as time goes by, they grow increasingly mathematical. The chemical sciences also reveal progressive naturalization. Chemical concepts like *atoms*, *covalent bonds*, and *molecules* become more and more formalized. Chemistry provides the basis for biology: living things are complex molecular machines. As biology makes progress, it becomes more and more heavily mathematical. But formalization in biology involves heavy use of computers. It involves building computational models of genetic networks, protein networks, cells, organisms, and ecosystems. Life is an informational process.

Living things are obviously complex. So the naturalization of biological concepts leads to the formal analysis of complexity. Living things evolve from simple to complex. Evolution is an algorithmic process; it is a vast computation running on the surface of the earth. Life climbs Mount Improbable (Dawkins 1996). The study of complexity in chemistry shows that all complex molecules evolved from simpler molecules; likewise all complex physical things evolved from simpler things. If any physical thing in our universe is complex, then it has been produced by an evolutionary process which climbed up through all lower levels of complexity.

The mathematical ideas behind the evolution of complexity appear to be general. They apply in biology, chemistry, and physics because they apply to everything. They apply to entire universes. If any universe is complex, then it has been produced by an evolutionary process which climbed up through all lower levels of complexity. These ideas inspire evolutionary cosmologies: simpler universes evolve into more complex universes. But cosmological evolution is also an algorithmic process. These ideas lend further support to digital physics, which argues that every universe is a software process

running on a hardware substrate. More complex universes require more complex hardware substrates. So these hardware substrates evolve.

Our universe is complex; and if it is running on some hardware god, then that god is also complex. All gods are complex; but all complex things have evolved; so if our universe runs on some hardware god, then it is the product of divine evolution. It is at the end of some lineage of hardware gods. This leads to a *digital polytheism* (Steinhart 2013; 2014). It starts with some simple self-reproducing computer. Through recursive self-improvement, simpler computers beget more complex computers. But all these cosmic computers are gods. If any god produces many offspring, then the lineages of gods branch to make a genealogical or phylogenetic tree. Every divine computer in this tree runs its own universe. Since the gods of digital polytheism are computers, they are highly natural. They easily fit into many natural theologies. For example, the ground is the ultimate sufficient reason for the entire tree of gods. Spirit runs through this tree like sap, powering every digital god. This tree of gods can be justified by formalized Ontological Arguments (Kiteley 1958; Millican 2004).

Digital polytheism resembles *process theology*. Process theology says God is a series of stages. The earlier stages of God produce the later stages. On one interpretation, the stages of God are gods running their own universes. If that is right, then all the digital gods are just parts of God. However, since the God of process theology is personal, while this tree of gods is not personal, it may be confusing to refer to it as God. For the digital theologian, it is more accurate to refer to this tree as *nature*. Although this digital theology is highly formalized, it is also extremely speculative. Progressive naturalists give it neither more nor less credence than it deserves. For progressive naturalists, it is far more interesting that this formalization shatters the old concept of God into a system of new concepts like ground, spirit, digital gods, and nature.

Naturalizing the Mind

Progressive naturalists strive to naturalize the mind. They strive to naturalize all psychological concepts by defining them mathematically. To this end, they adopt a *physiological strategy*. The physiological strategy asserts that minds are brains and that brains are digital machines (Burks 1973; Moravec 2000). So the physiological strategy becomes a *computational strategy*. It defines a clear research program: given any mental process, figure out its associated brain process; given any brain process, figure out its associated computation; identify the mental process with that computation.

Consider *consciousness*. Progressive naturalists reason like this: either consciousness is mysterious or not; if it is, then it is illusory; if it is not, then it can be formally defined. This possibility justifies research programs which aim to formally define consciousness. Such research programs do exist. Here naturalists can follow Churchland (1986, 1995). They can appeal to theories which define consciousness in terms of *integrated information* (Tononi 2008; Tegmark 2015). Integrated information theory uses the mathematics of information and computation to formally define the consciousness of a physical system as a quantity *phi*.

The physiological and computational strategies for naturalizing the mind are highly successful. They are confirmed by medicine, cognitive science, neuroscience, artificial

intelligence, and so on. Despite the successes of the physiological strategy, many writers still argue that the mind is not the brain. They say the mind is an immaterial substance which causally interacts with the brain. While many naturalists dogmatically reject such mind–body dualism, progressive naturalists are open to it. They ask only for a research program which formally defines the immaterial mind and its linkage with the brain. After all, since mathematical structures need not be material, the immateriality of the mind cannot not block its formal definition. Computers can be made out of purely mental stuff (Putnam 1975); they can be *spiritual machines* (Richards 2002). However, since immaterial minds have persistently resisted formalization, progressive naturalists are extremely skeptical about mind–body dualism. It is almost certainly false.

Likewise, despite the many successes of the computational strategy, many writers still argue that minds are not computers. They say that concepts like free will, agency, the first-person perspective, qualitative experience, and consciousness cannot be defined computationally (Goetze & Taliaferro 2008, p. 7). These concepts are mysterious. They persistently resist all formalization. Here progressive naturalists say that if these concepts are really mysterious, then they are empty illusions.

Now consider the *God of classical theism*. This God is an immaterial thinking substance (Swinburne 1994, Chapter 6; Plantinga 2008, p. 2). Most dogmatic naturalists reject this God because he is not material; or not physical; or not found in science.¹² But progressive naturalists do not attack classical theism from any dogmatic position. They will accept this God *if but only if* there is some research program which formalizes his definition. Since classical theism persistently resists all formalization, progressive naturalists are *extremely* skeptical about this God. Since progressive naturalism is dynamical, and oriented towards the future, it has little interest in criticizing classical theism. It is more interested in new alternatives. It is interested in the digital theologies of the transhumanists, singularitarians, and others. It is interested in religious and spiritual naturalisms (Crosby 2002; Peters 2002; Stone 2008).

Religious Naturalism

Theistic religions say that humans and gods interact in many ways. For example, people *pray* to the gods for help; the gods in turn perform helpful *miracles* for people. Since naturalistic gods do not intervene in their worlds, it is not likely that these concepts can be naturalized. Naturalism rejects prayers and miracles. This rejection of human–divine interaction spreads out into the other theistic worship practices. If these are the only religious activities, then naturalism makes religion obsolete.

However, worship is not the only way to engage the deities. The religious naturalists and spiritual naturalists have their own symbols and practices (Crosby 2014). These practices often rely more on spirit than on any gods. One naturalistic practice involves taking *entheogens*. Those who take psilocybin often report experiencing a profound energy flowing through their bodies and all other things (Griffiths et al. 2006). This spiritual energy binds all things together into a natural unity. Another naturalistic practice involves dancing at festivals known as *raves*. Rave dancers enter hyper-arousal trances. During their trances, they likewise report that spiritual energy binds their bodies and all other things together into a natural unity (Sylvan 2005, Chapter 3).

Breath traditionally symbolizes the spiritual energy flowing through all things. Hence the practices of hatha yoga can be naturalized. Many traditional Buddhist meditative practices are based on breathing. These are naturalized as mindfulness meditation (Flanagan 2013; Harris 2014). Similar practices are found in ancient Stoicism. They are likewise adopted by spiritual naturalists (Irvine 2009). Naturalists can and do have mystical experiences (Comte-Sponville 2006, Chapter 3). Those experiences may reveal nature itself; but they do not reveal it in any theoretical way.

Naturalists can have their own religious holidays and festivals. They celebrate the solstices and equinoxes (Toland 1720; Harrison 1999; Crosby 2014). Some argue that *Burning Man* is a naturalistic religious celebration (Pike 2005; Gilmore 2010). If they are right, then it is a festival in which fire is used in sacred rituals. Fire functions as a symbol of natural spiritual energy. Burning Man is one of many spiritual fire festivals in the United States. The Spark Collective also hosts spiritual fire festivals. These many fire festivals are sometimes collectively grouped as the *Family of Fire*. The Family of Fire may be an emerging naturalistic religion.

Conclusion

Many naturalists are hostile towards religion. Their hostility is often motivated by the assumption that the only religious options are the old religions. Those old religions involve concepts that are not natural. So naturalism, whether dogmatic or progressive, refutes the old religions. But the old religions are no longer the only options. New ways of being religious and spiritual are emerging rapidly. Many of these new ways are highly naturalistic. They involve natural theologies and natural practices. A few of these ways have been mentioned here. But even a small search of the world wide web reveals a great network of new religious naturalisms not mentioned here. Naturalists need not reject either theology or religion. Having abandoned the old supernaturalisms, we stand today on the shores of an unexplored ocean of religious and spiritual possibility. If we set sail into that great sea, who knows what new worlds we might find?

Notes

- 1 Rea uses materialism to illustrate this point. Many naturalists are materialists. But 'As many naturalists have agreed, science *could* discover that materialism is false'; if it did, then would 'naturalism follow science and reject materialism? Or would it follow materialism in being rejected by science?' (Rea 2002, p. 23). Rea argues that naturalism 'must be compatible with *anything* science might tell us about nature or supernature. Thus, no version of naturalism can include any substantive thesis' (2002, p. 55).
- 2 David Armstrong defines naturalism as "the doctrine that reality consists of nothing but a single all-embracing spatio-temporal system" (1978, p. 261). He says all things in this system causally interact. Draper defines nature as "the spatio-temporal universe of physical entities together with any entities that are ontologically or causally reducible to those entities" (2005, p. 278). For similar definitions see Rea (2002, p. 55).
- 3 See Tegmark (2003) for a discussion of possible universes in current physics.
- 4 Hartry Field is a nominalist (1980); nominalists deny abstract objects.

- 5 Tegmark says all physical things *are* mathematical objects (1998).
- 6 Moser and Yandell use the one true final theory to define naturalism. They say naturalism is the view that “every real entity either consists of or is somehow ontically grounded in the objects countenanced by the hypothetically completed empirical sciences” (2000, p. 4). For similar definitions see Rea (2002, p. 59).
- 7 Progressivists agree with Giere that naturalism should be understood “not in terms of theses about the world but in terms of a set of *strategies* to be employed in seeking to understand the world” (Giere, 1999, p. 70). Rea (2002) argues that naturalism is a research program. It involves rules for *belief formation* and *revision*. Rea argues that naturalism is a research program. It involves rules for belief formation and revision.
- 8 Resnik (1997, Chapter 6) argues that there is no clear distinction between mathematical and physical things in current physics. Confirmation holism suggests that there is no way to draw any division between real and unreal terms in any theory.
- 9 Tipler’s fourth testable prediction (1995, p. 146) is that the mass of the Higgs boson is 220 ± 20 GeV; however its mass turns out to be very close to 125 GeV. Tipler’s fifth testable prediction (1995, p. 149) states that the Hubble constant is less than 45 (km/sec)/mpc; it is estimated to be around 70 (km/sec)/mpc.
- 10 The definition of God as the abstract ground of concrete being begins with the Platonic form of the Good and the Plotinian One. It was revived by Tillich (1951). It becomes propositional with Leslie (1989, Chapter 8). It can be identified with the proposition *e* in Andersonian deontic logic (Lokhorst 2006).
- 11 Hobbes defined spirit as a subtle material fluid (*Answer to Bramhall*, p. 309; *The Elements of Law Natural and Politic*, 1, XI:4). Descartes defines spirit as a natural wind or flame (*The Passions of the Soul*, Article 10; *Treatise on Man*, in Cottingham, Stoothoff, and Murdoch 1984, p.100). Newton writes about spirit as energy at the end of the *General Scholium*.
- 12 Writing as an atheist, Nielsen (2001) says “Naturalism denies that there are any spiritual or supernatural realities. There are, that is, no purely mental substances and there are no supernatural realities transcendent to the world” (p. 29). This dogmatic naturalism rules out the definition of God as a bodiless person.

References

- Armstrong, D. (1978) “Naturalism, materialism, and first philosophy.” *Philosophia* 8: 261–276.
- Balaguer, M. (1998) *Platonism and Anti-Platonism in Mathematics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Burks, A. (1973) “Logic, computers, and men.” *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 46: 39–57.
- Churchland, Patricia (1986) *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Science of the Mind-Brain*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Churchland, Paul (1995) *The Engine of Reason, The Seat of the Soul: A Philosophical Journey into the Brain*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Cicero (2008) *On the Nature of the Gods*, trans. P. Walsh. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Comte-Sponville, A. (2006) *The Little Book of Atheist Spirituality*, trans. N. Huston. New York: Viking.
- Cottingham, J., Stoothoff, R., Murdoch, D. (1984) *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crosby, D. (2002) *A Religion of Nature*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Crosby, D. (2014) *More than Discourse: Symbolic Expressions of Naturalistic Faith*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

- Dawkins, R. (1996) *Climbing Mount Improbable*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Draper, P. (2005) "God, science, and naturalism," in W. Wainwright (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 272–303.
- Field, H. (1980) *Science without Numbers*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Flanagan, O. (2013) *The Bodhisattva's Brain: Buddhism Naturalized*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Fredkin, E. (2003) "An introduction to digital philosophy," *International Journal of Theoretical Physics* 42: 189–247.
- Giere, R. (1999) *Science without Laws*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gilmore, L. (2010) *Theatre in a Crowded Fire: Ritual and Spirituality at Burning Man*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Givens, T. (2015) *Wrestling the Angel: Foundations of Mormon Thought*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Goetz, S., and Taliaferro, C. (2008) *Naturalism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Gorham, G. (2013) "The theological foundation of Hobbesian Physics: A defense of a corporeal God." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 21: 240–261.
- Harris, S. (2014) *Waking Up*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Harrison, P. (1999) *Pantheism: Understanding the Divinity in Nature and the Universe*. Boston, MA: Element Books.
- Harvie, T. (2011) "God as a field of force: Personhood and science in Wolfhart Pannenberg's pneumatology." *Heythrop Journal* 52: 250–259.
- Irvine, W. (2009) *A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kaufman, G. (2000) *In the Beginning ... Creativity*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Kiteley, M. (1958) "Existence and the Ontological Argument." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 18: 533–535.
- Leslie, J. (1989) *Universes*. New York: Routledge.
- Lokhorst, G-J. (2006) "Andersonian deontic logic, propositional quantification, and Mally." *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic* 47: 385–395.
- Millican, P. (2004) "The one fatal flaw in Anselm's argument." *Mind* 113: 451–467.
- Moravec, H. (1988) *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Moravec, H. (2000) *Robot: Mere Machine to Transcendent Mind*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Moser, P., and Yandell, D. (2000) "Farewell to philosophical naturalism," in W. Craig and J. Moreland (eds.) *Naturalism: A Critical Analysis*. New York: Routledge, pp. 3–24.
- Nielsen, K. (2001) *Naturalism and Religion*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.
- Peters, K. (2002) *Dancing with the Sacred: Evolution, Ecology, and God*. Harrisburg: Trinity Press International.
- Pew Forum (2008) *US Religious Landscape Survey: Religious Beliefs and Practices*. Available at <http://www.pewforum.org/2008/06/01/u-s-religious-landscape-survey-religious-beliefs-and-practices/> (accessed 11 September 2018).
- Pike, S. (2005) "No novenas for the dead: Ritual action and communal memory at the Temple of Tears," in L. Gilmore and M. Van Proyen (2005) *AfterBurn: Reflections on Burning Man* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, pp. 195–214.
- Plantinga, A. (2008) "Against naturalism," in A. Plantinga and M. Tooley (2008) *Knowledge of God*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, pp. 1–69.
- Putnam, H. (1975) "Philosophy and our mental life," in *Mind, Language, and Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Reprinted in N. Block (ed.) *Readings in Philosophy of Psychology*, Vol. 1, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1980, pp. 134–143.
- Rea, M. (2002) *World Without Design: The Ontological Consequences of Naturalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Resnik, M. (1997) *Mathematics as a Science of Patterns*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Richards, J. (ed.) (2002) *Are We Spiritual Machines? Ray Kurzweil vs. The Critics of Strong AI*. Seattle: Discovery Institute.
- Steinhart, E. (2012) "On the number of gods," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 72: 75–83.
- Steinhart, E. (2013) "On the plurality of gods." *Religious Studies* 49: 289–312.
- Steinhart, E. (2014) *Your Digital Afterlives: Computational Theories of Life after Death*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Stone, J. (2008) *Religious Naturalism Today*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Swinburne, R. (1994) *The Christian God*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sylvan, R. (2005) *Trance Formation*. New York: Routledge.
- Tegmark, M. (1998) "Is 'The Theory of Everything' merely the Ultimate Ensemble Theory?" *Annals of Physics* 270: 1–51.
- Tegmark, M. (2003) "Parallel universes." *Scientific American* 288: 40–51.
- Tegmark, M. (2015) "Consciousness as a state of matter." Available at <https://arxiv.org/abs/1401.1219> (accessed 11 September 2018).
- Tillich, P. (1951) *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Tipler, F. (1995) *The Physics of Immortality: Modern Cosmology, God and the Resurrection of the Dead*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Toland, J. (1720) *Pantheisticon*. London: Samuel Peterson.
- Tononi, G. (2008) "Consciousness as integrated information." *Biological Bulletin* 215: 216–242.

Part III

Critiques of Theism

Logical Objections to Theism

STEPHEN LAW

This essay is in two parts. In “A Map of the Terrain,” I map out several varieties of logical objection to theism, provide some illustrations, and then set out a number of response strategies that may be employed by theists in defense of their belief. In “Specific Examples,” I examine in more detail some of the best-known examples of logical objections to theism, including (i) objections associated with the doctrines of divine simplicity, divine personhood, and divine foreknowledge, (ii) the logical problem of evil, and (iii) some verificationist and falsificationist objections.

A Map of the Terrain

By *theism* I mean belief in an omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good being. Of course, these are not the only attributes associated with God. Many insist that God is, in some sense, simple. Many also require that God be a person – an agent who acts (in creating the universe *ex nihilo*, for example) and with whom one might enter into a personal relationship.

There are a variety of arguments that I think might reasonably be included under the title “logical objections to theism.” I will categorize them as *internal*, *external*, and *nonsense objections*. I will then consider some general strategies for responding to these types of arguments.

Internal Objections

If someone claims to have discovered in the rainforests of Brazil a triangle possessing not three but four sides, mathematicians won’t mount an expensive expedition to confirm whether or not that object exists. We can know, from the comfort of our armchairs, that

there is no such thing. A triangle is, by definition, three-sided. To assert that there exists a triangle that is not three-sided is therefore to involve yourself in a straightforward logical contradiction, and contradictions cannot be true.¹ It appears we can similarly know, from the comfort of our armchairs – just by unpacking the concepts involved – that neither are there are any married bachelors or female stallions out there waiting to be discovered.

Internal objections to theism turn on the thought that we can similarly rule out, from the comfort of our armchairs, the truth of theism. The suggestion is that theistic belief involves a logical contradiction. Thus we can know – by means of *a priori*, armchair reflection alone – that theism is false.

Internal objections to theism come in two varieties: those that maintain that theism requires the instantiation of particular divine attributes that are logically impossible, and those that maintain theism requires the co-instantiation of divine attributes that cannot logically be combined.

A familiar alleged example of the former sort of inconsistency is what I shall term the *Riddle of the Stone* objection to God's omnipotence. That objection runs as follows. If God is omnipotent then he can do anything. But if God can do anything, then he can create a stone so heavy that even he cannot lift it. But then it follows that, having created such a stone, God can't do everything: he can't lift it. Thus, some are quick to conclude, the very idea of an omnipotent being involves a logical contradiction: God's omnipotence logically entails his non-omnipotence. Thus we can rule out an omnipotent God from the comfort of our armchairs, by means of logic alone.

The second variety of internal objection maintains, not that any particular divine attribute involves or generates a logical contradiction *by itself*, but rather that certain divine attributes *in combination* do so. An example is the supposed logical incompatibility of divine simplicity and divine personhood. For those who define God as being both simple and a person (and not all theists do), paradoxes such as the following arise. The concept of simplicity seems to require that God be *non-temporal* (for otherwise, being extended in time, God would have temporal parts). The concept of personhood, on the other hand, appears to require that persons be *temporal* (for a person must be capable of possessing *psychological states*, such as beliefs and desires, which must have temporal duration; moreover, persons can perform *actions*, which require a temporal framework within which to take place). But the claim that there exists a being that is both temporal and non-temporal involves a straightforward contradiction. This there's no such simple person, and so no God, so defined.

External Objections

I turn now to externalist objections. The objection is not that there is some internal logical inconsistency involved in theistic belief *per se*, but rather that theistic belief is logically incompatible with certain *other* belief or beliefs the theist holds. Probably the best-known external objection is the *logical problem of evil*.

Theists typically accept the existence of at least some evil. The logical problem of evil involves the thought that the theist's belief in the existence of evil is *logically incompatible* with their belief in God. It's argued that a God, being omniscient, would know of the existence of such evil, and, being omnipotent, would have the power to prevent such evil. Moreover, being perfectly good, God would not want evil to exist.

Thus, if evil exists, God does not. So theists who also believe evil exists might seem to be caught a straightforward contradiction.²

Nonsense Objections

A third kind of objection to theism that I include under the umbrella of “logical” objections are those that maintain that God talk is not false, but meaningless or nonsensical. Note that both internal and external objections conclude that theism is false. But what if theism fails in a more radical way, by failing to get even as far as asserting something capable of being true or false? That is what the proponents of nonsense objections maintain.

Why might we conclude that God talk is neither true, nor false, but meaningless? Most obviously, because we find it fails to satisfy our preferred criterion of meaningfulness. The criterion best known for having been applied in this way is the Verification Principle (closely associated with A. J. Ayer and the logical positivists). Here’s a simple version:

(VP) A statement is meaningful if and only if it is verifiable.

Under what circumstances is a statement verifiable? According to Ayer in his *Language, Truth, and Logic* (LTL, 1936), there are just two ways a statement might be verified.

First, the statement might be *analytic* (roughly: true in virtue of meaning, in the way, e.g., “bachelors are unmarried,” and “triangles have three sides,” are supposed to be). Such statements, being true in virtue of meaning, can potentially be verified *a priori*, by reflection alone, from the comfort of our armchairs.

Second, Ayer says a statement is verifiable if there are possible observations “relevant to determining that statement’s truth or falsehood” (LTL p. 38). Note that verification, in Ayer’s intended sense, is a fairly weak notion. There is no suggestion that for a statement to be verified its truth must be establish able *conclusively* (though in the case of analytic statements that’s possible). It’s sufficient, thinks Ayer, that *observation might supply grounds either for supposing the statement is true or for supposing it is false*.

Scientific statements, such as that all actions are accompanied by equal and opposite reactions, all emeralds are green, and so on, are not analytic. Nevertheless, that statement about emeralds, while incapable of being established conclusively (there’s always the risk of a future non-green emerald cropping up), can at least be supported by observational evidence. The statement can also be disconfirmed observationally (by an observation of a non-green emerald). Hence, on Ayer’s view, though such scientific claims aren’t analytic, they are verifiable, and so are meaningful.

However, Ayer famously goes on to rule out a great deal of talk as meaningless, including moral talk. On Ayer’s view, moral statements, being unverifiable, are literally meaningless, and thus incapable of being true or false. Ayer also maintains that the statement that God exists is unverifiable; it is, he concludes, meaningless.

Response Strategies

Before we look in more detail at various examples of these three varieties of logical objection – internal, external, and nonsense – I want briefly to map out some possible *response strategies*. Theists don’t typically shrug, admit their mistake, and wander off converts to

atheism when presented with such objections. They have developed a range of strategies designed to deal with these criticisms. I briefly set out below the general form these maneuvers take so we will be able more easily to navigate our way through the further examples.

Response Strategies to Internal Objections

When presented with an internal objection, theists may:

1. maintain that the alleged logical contradiction is merely apparent; or
2. drop the divine attribute(s) causing the problem.

There are two ways in which theists might adopt strategy (1). First, they might adopt (1) by (a) attempting to show that there's some error in the reasoning of those who claim there is an internal contradiction. The theist may insist the critic has slipped up, logically speaking, and concluded there's a contradiction where in truth there is none.

Alternatively, a theist might adopt (1) by insisting that (b) while, if what the critic took the theist to mean were correct, then the theist would indeed be guilty of contradicting themselves, *the critic has misunderstood*. The critic's *logic* may be faultless, but they have nevertheless failed properly to understand what the theist means by at least one of the terms involved. Suppose I say, "There's a bank nearby, but there's no bank nearby." I appear to have contradicted myself. However, if it turns out that by my first use of "bank" I meant riverbank, and by the second, financial bank, then the contradiction is revealed to be merely apparent. Theists may similarly suggest that what they mean by terms like "simple" or "omnipotent" as applied to God is not what the critic assumes. Once what the theist means by such terms has been clarified, any supposed internal contradiction can be shown to be merely apparent.

Here's an illustration of strategy (1b). Some theists respond to the Riddle of the Stone by claiming, first, that, in saying God is "omnipotent," they don't mean God that can do the logically impossible. God can do anything possible, but making a four-sided triangle, or a stone so heavy that even an omnipotent being could not lift it, is not a logical possibility.

But why suppose that God's inability to bring about such logically contradictory states of affairs entails he lacks omnipotence? One suggestion would be to say that *logical impossibilities are no real limitation on God's power*, for it is not as if there is some possible state of affairs – the existence of a four-sided triangle, say – that God is somehow *prevented* from realizing. Rather, the expression "There's a four sided triangle" fails to pick out any possible state of affairs.

So, some may conclude, when *properly* understood, the claim that God is omnipotent generates no contradiction.

Alternatively, a theist confronted with the Riddle of the Stone might adopt option (ii) and drop omnipotence from the list of divine attributes. That provides a straightforward solution, though it's a far less popular move.

Response Strategies to External Objections

When presented with external objections, theists have a further option. As with internal objections, they may:

1. maintain that the alleged logical contradiction is merely apparent; or
2. drop the divine attribute(s) causing the problem.

However, they may also:

3. drop the external belief(s) causing the problem.

Consider, for example, the logical problem of evil outlined earlier. Theists might respond by: (1) insisting that the supposed contradiction involved in believing that there exists both God and evil is merely apparent, or (2) dropping one of the divine attributes causing the problem – the logical problem can be neatly solved by dropping any one the three omni-attributes (so, for example, the theist might drop omniscience, maintaining that God is indeed omnipotent and omnibenevolent, but is ignorant of the evil it would be in his power to remove³). However, theists also have option (3). It is the addition of the theist's external belief in the existence of evil that generates the logical problem of evil. So the theist might avoid contradiction by dropping, not their theism, but rather their belief that evil exists. For example, a theist might respond to the logical problem of evil by dismissing the appearance of evil as being merely an illusion.

Pseudo-Profundity and Embracing Contradiction

Notice that there is a further way in which theists may respond to both internal and external objections to theism. They may choose to embrace – and perhaps even *make a virtue of* – the supposed contradiction.

If you want to appear profound, there are several fairly tried and trusted recipes you can follow. One of the most effective is to contradict yourself regarding one of life's big themes, such as life and death, meaning and purpose, war and peace, and so on. Here are three examples I made up:

Sanity is a kind of madness.
Life is often a kind of death.
The ordinary is extraordinary.

Such sentences are interpretable in all sorts of ways and can easily appear profound. In George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, two of the three slogans of the Party have a similarly contradictory character:

War is peace.
Freedom is slavery.
Ignorance is strength.

If you are an aspiring guru, the attraction of making such contradictory remarks is twofold. First, they make your audience do the intellectual labor for you. You can sit back, adopt a sage-like expression, and let your disciples figure out what you mean. Secondly, such remarks are interpretable in numerous ways. This gives you enormous wiggle room if someone dares challenge you (for you can imply your critic is a crude, overly-literal thinker who has failed properly to grasp the true meaning of your remark).

The thought that contradiction is a sign of profundity often crops up in religious contexts. Nonbelievers usually take what look like straightforward contradictions within a religious doctrine to indicate falsehood. The faithful, on the other hand, may take those

very same contradictions to indicate genuine insight. Indeed, religious folk will sometimes make a point of appearing to contradict themselves, saying things like “God is, and yet he is not,” “God is one, and yet he is many,” and “God is good, and yet he is not.’

There’s no denying that seemingly contradictory remarks can sometimes express something profound. No doubt we can find some kind of truth even in Orwell’s poisonous examples. However, given the formulaic way in which contradiction can be used to generate the illusion of depth and profundity – that’s to say, to generate *pseudo-profundity* – we should take care not to be too easily impressed.

Response Strategies to Nonsense Objections

Responses to nonsense objections include:

1. rejecting the criterion of nonsense/meaningfulness on which theism comes out as nonsense/meaningless; and
2. maintaining that, whether or not the proposed criterion of nonsense/meaninglessness is correct, theism meets it.

In response to Ayer’s verificationist challenge to the meaningfulness of God talk, then, theists may challenge the principle of verification on which Ayer relies, and/or insist that theism is in fact verifiable in the required sense. As we will see, both kinds of responses to Ayer’s challenge have been made.

Specific Examples

As promised, I now turn to some examples of logical objections to theism. This is merely a selection. There are many more such objections, and it may be that many more will be developed.

Divine Simplicity

God is widely supposed to be, in a certain sense, *simple*. The doctrine of divine simplicity is characterized neatly by Eleonore Stump (1997) as involving four claims:

1. God cannot possess spatial or temporal parts.
2. God cannot have any intrinsic accidental properties.
3. There cannot be any real distinction between one essential property and another in God’s nature.
4. There cannot be a real distinction between essence and existence in God.

The first condition is straightforward, and rules out God being extended in space in the way that, for example, physical objects are. God’s simplicity is also widely supposed to require that God be *eternal* rather than temporal. If God were spread out across time, then he would have temporal parts, with one part occurring before another.

The second claim involves a familiar philosophical distinction between essential properties – roughly, those an entity must possess – and accidental properties – those

an entity possesses but might have lacked or might come to lack. Physical objects are widely thought to have both essential and accidental properties. For example, it's widely supposed that it's essential to this table in front of me that it be made of wood – a table not made of wood would not be this very table. However, it's not essential to this table that it be painted red, or be in my living room – these are merely accidental properties of the table. Some properties of my table are also merely extrinsic – they can be changed without a change in the object (being in my living room is an extrinsic property of this table: it can be relocated without any change to it). Other properties are intrinsic – a change in the property involves a change in the object (a change in the length of one table leg would involve an intrinsic change in the table). The doctrine of divine simplicity requires that all God's intrinsic properties be essential to him. So, while it may not be essential to God that he possess the extrinsic property of *currently being thought about by me* (presumably, God might easily have lacked that particular property), the property of omnipotence, being intrinsic to God, is essential to him.

The third claim requires that all God's essential properties be identical. So, for example, God's essential properties of omnipotence, omniscience and perfect goodness must, in truth, be *one and the same property*: a single property that, say, we are merely conceptualizing or thinking about in different ways.

The fourth claim exploits another philosophical distinction – between essence and existence. The essential properties of a thing typically do not include existence. For example, this table's essential properties do not include existence – the table might not have existed and it will one day cease to exist. God's essence, on the other hand, includes existence. Indeed, given the third claim, his property of existence must be identical with his other essential properties – of omnipotence, omniscience, perfect goodness, and so on. God's essence *is* existence.

The doctrine of divine simplicity might be supposed logically inconsistent with *other* doctrines regarding God, such as the doctrine of the Trinity. How can God be both a simple being and yet triune? And how can God, who lacks spatial and temporal parts, be Jesus, who had spatial and temporal parts (arms and legs, and a birth and death, for example)?

Further, the claim that God is simple has also been accused of being logically contradictory *per se*. One of the more obvious objections runs as follows: surely, we can logically separate out God's properties of omniscience, omnipotence and omni-benevolence from him as their logical possessor. But then God is himself logically and ontologically complex, not simple.

However, there is a long theistic tradition that insists that God's omni-properties are not, in fact, logically distinct properties of him, in the way that, say, my height and my weight are logically distinct properties of me. God does not merely *possess* his omni-properties, he is numerically *identical with* them. God and his omnipotence are one and the same thing; God and his omniscience are one and the same thing, and so on. But then and, given the transitivity of identity (if *a* is identical with *b* and *b* with *c*, then *a* is identical with *c*) then all these omni- properties are also identical with each other. Hence God is, after all, logically simple.

Perhaps more problematic is the following external objection: God, while simple, is also widely supposed by theists *to share at least some properties with his creation*.

For example, God possesses knowledge and power, but then so do I (even if not to the maximum, as God does). The difficulty is: if power is a property that God and I share, then surely God cannot be *identical* with that property. And so God's possession of that property – power – does entail that he have some logical complexity after all: we can logically distinguish God from some property of his. It might seem that the only way we can salvage the doctrine of divine simplicity is by denying any commonality between God and his creation.

One response to this external objection is to insist that while God is indeed perfectly powerful, and I too am powerful to some limited degree, it doesn't follow that there is, then, some property – power – that we share. Miller (1996) argues that perfect power is not power. Perfect power is a kind of limit, as is zero power. And zero power is not power. Similarly, the lower limit in the case of speed – zero mph – is not a speed. Miller suggests that perfect power should not be thought of as maximum amount of power (what he calls a “limit simpliciter”) but as a “limit case” like zero power or zero speed.

Graham Oppy (2003) outlines a different response to this external objection, suggesting that in correctly describing individuals *a* and *b* as being *F*, it does not follow that there exists some single corresponding property in the world joint possession of which by *a* and *b* makes both “*a* is *F*” and “*b* is *F*” true. For the predicate “is *F*” may not pick out an objectively existing property. Suppose, for example, that “is *F*” is defined thus:

something is *F* if and only if it possesses either property *G* or property *H*.

Suppose both *a* and *b* are *F*. It doesn't follow there is one property they share – for it may be that *a* is *F* by virtue of being *G* and *b* is *F* by virtue of being *H*. But then similarly, while both God and I are powerful, God may be powerful by virtue of his possessing (or being identical with) a property *P*1, while I am powerful by virtue of my possessing some other property *P*2. In which case, while we can both be correctly described as powerful, there need be no property we share.

That concludes my brief sampling of the many internal and external logical objections that might be raised in connection with the doctrine of divine simplicity. But note there is also the potential for a form of nonsense objection to be raised against the doctrine. For example, in his *Philosophical Investigations*, Ludwig Wittgenstein (1953, I: 45–48) attacks the notion of absolute logical simplicity, which played a crucial role in his earlier philosophy. Our talk of what is “simple” and “composite” has its home in settings in which we describe, for example, a chessboard as a complex made up of squares. But is each chess square simple? Within the context of the game of chess, perhaps. However, in other contexts each square might be thought of as made up of two rectangles, or of a larger shape from which another has been subtracted. A chess square's cream color might also be seen as a composite of yellow and white. Each chess square is bounded by four straight lines. And each of those lines might in turn be viewed as a combination of mathematical points. Conversely, a mathematical point might be seen as the intersection of two lines. Talk of “simple” and “composite” is highly diverse and has its home in such varied linguistic contexts. Wittgenstein thought that to abstract away from all such linguistic contexts or “language games” and try to apply the terms

“simple” and “composite” in an *absolute* way – to talk about a thing or things that are simple, *period* – is to end up talking nonsense:

But what are the simple constituent parts of which reality is composed? – What are the simple constituent parts of a chair? – The bits of wood of which it is made? Or the molecules, or the atoms? – “Simple” means: not composite. And here the point is: in what sense “composite”? It makes no sense at all to speak absolutely of the “simple parts of a chair.” (1953, I:47)

It is at least arguable that the attempt to define God as being *absolutely* “simple” involves a similar drift into nonsense.

Divine Foreknowledge

The classic problem of divine foreknowledge is an *external* objection. The objection is that the divine attribute of omniscience is logically incompatible with the theist’s further belief that God has imbued human beings with free will – that’s to say, the freedom to act as they freely choose, without their action being compelled or determined by anything outside themselves. The Jewish philosopher Maimonides (1135–1204) produced a classic statement of the objection: “Does God know or does He not know that a certain individual will be good or bad? If thou sayest ‘He knows,’ then it necessarily follows that [that] man is compelled to act as God knew beforehand he would act, otherwise God’s knowledge would be imperfect ...” (Maimonides 1996).

The suggestion seems to be that, if God knows Tom will do *x* tomorrow, then necessarily, Tom will do *x* tomorrow. But then Tom lacks the freedom to do otherwise. Whether or not Tom performs some future action *x* is never up to him – it is determined by factors outside himself: by what God knows he will do.

There is also an *internal* objection to theism generated by divine foreknowledge. If God, being omniscient, knew yesterday that he will do *x* tomorrow, then God can’t do anything other than *x* tomorrow. But if God can’t do other than *x* tomorrow, then he is not omnipotent: his power is limited by his *own* foreknowledge.

But have we really identified a problem regarding divine foreknowledge? After all, we also have (admittedly fallible) knowledge of what will happen in the future. I might know, for example, that Ted will go to the shops tomorrow. But it is a necessary condition, of knowing that *P*, that *P* is true. Hence my knowing Ted will go to the shops tomorrow entails that Ted will indeed go to the shops. So does *my* knowledge of what Ted will do tomorrow entail he lacks the freedom to do otherwise?

Actually, *this* problem of foreknowledge has a solution. What is necessary is the *conditional* (if-then) statement that *if* I know that *P*, *then* *P*. It does not follow that if I know that *P*, then necessarily *P* (i.e., that it is a necessary truth that *P*, that things could not have been otherwise). More generally:

Necessarily: If *x*, then *y*
 does not entail
 If *x*, then necessarily: *y*.

Compare: necessarily, *if* Tom is a bachelor, *then* Tom is unmarried. That conditional is a necessary truth. But of course it does not follow that if Tom is a bachelor, then it's a necessary truth that Tom is unmarried – that Tom *lacks the freedom* to get married.

Similarly then, while it's a necessary truth that if I know Ted will go to the shops tomorrow, then Ted will go to the shops tomorrow, it doesn't follow that my knowledge of what Ted will do entails Ted lacks the freedom to do otherwise.

So have we solved the problem of *divine* foreknowledge? If my knowing that tomorrow Ted will go to the shops tomorrow is consistent with Tom's having the freedom to do otherwise, why shouldn't God's knowing what Ted will do tomorrow be consistent with Ted's freedom to do otherwise?

If there is still a problem regarding *divine* foreknowledge, it seems that will be because there's something special about God's foreknowledge. Of course there are differences between human foreknowledge and God's foreknowledge. In particular, unlike us, God is *infallible* about what will happen in the future. So does God's infallibility entail that, if God knows Ted will go to the shops tomorrow, then necessarily Ted will go to the shops tomorrow – that Ted lacks the freedom to do otherwise?

It seems not. God's infallibility requires:

Necessarily: if God *believes* that P, then P.

So, necessarily: if God infallibly believes Ted will go to the shops tomorrow, then Ted will go to the shops tomorrow. However, it does not follow that if God infallibly believes Ted will go to the shops tomorrow, then necessarily Ted will go to the shops – that Ted lacks the freedom to do otherwise. Again, that inference involves an illicit slide from:

Necessarily: If x, then y, to: If x, then necessarily: y.

Of course, if Ted knows today that God believes he, Ted, will go to the shops tomorrow, then Ted might, given his free will, choose not to go to the shops and so render God fallible. Now obviously, given that necessarily, God is infallible, Ted must lack the ability to make God fallible. But does this in turn require that Ted lack free will?

No. Whenever Ted *thinks* he knows what God believes Ted will do tomorrow, and Ted acts to make God's belief false, it turns out Ted's just mistaken about what God believed Ted would freely choose to do.

However, while God's infallible belief that Ted will go to the shops tomorrow does not seem to be incompatible with Ted having the freedom to do otherwise, perhaps, if we also add into the mix (i) the suggestion that God knew *yesterday* what Ted will do tomorrow, and (ii) a further necessity – that the past is unalterable – then a successful argument that divine foreknowledge is incompatible with free will might be constructed. Some more sophisticated versions of the problem of divine foreknowledge take this form. Here's one example (let T be: Ted will go to the shops tomorrow):⁴

- (i) Yesterday, God infallibly believed P.
- (ii) If E occurred in the past it is now necessary that E occurred then.
- (iii) Thus it is now necessary that God believed T.
- (iv) Necessarily, if God believed T, then T.

- (v) If P is now necessary, and necessarily (if P then Q) then Q is now necessary.
- (vi) Thus it is now necessary that T.
- (vii) If it is now necessary that T, then Ted cannot do other than go to the shops tomorrow.
- (viii) Thus, Ted cannot do otherwise than go to the shops tomorrow.
- (ix) If you cannot do otherwise when you act, you do not act freely.
- (x) Thus when Ted goes to the shops tomorrow, he will not do so freely.

It remains contentious whether any such argument is cogent. Rather than explore in yet more detail the precise form the problem of divine foreknowledge might take, let's now look briefly at perhaps the best-known response to the problem: that of Boethius.

Boethius (1999) attempts to deal with the problem of foreknowledge by denying the first premise of the argument sketched above. That's to say, Boethius would deny that God infallibly knew *yesterday* that Ted will go to the shops tomorrow. This is because Boethius considers God to be eternal – a timeless being. It's not that God lacks knowledge; rather his knowledge is not temporally locatable in the way ours is. Being a timeless being, God does know anything *at a time*. Rather, he knows timelessly.

Of course, the view that God is a timeless being is controversial, and indeed we will see that some theists consider the claim that God is eternal to be incompatible with the claim that he is a person, for example (see §2.3 Divine Personhood below). Boethius's solution is obviously not available to those who believe both that God is a person and that God's personhood requires that he be a temporal being.

Not only is Boethius's solution unavailable to a certain sort of theist, it appears his solution in any case fails. The original objection can easily be tweaked to deal with it. For suppose Boethius is correct and God only *timelessly* infallibly knows that T. Still, it is presumably now necessary that God timelessly infallibly knows T. But then it still follows that it is *now* necessary that Ted will go to the shops tomorrow. But then Ted still lacks the freedom to do otherwise.

Divine Personhood

The thought that God is a *person* generates various internal objections to theism.

We noted above that the suggestion that God is a person would seem to require that God possess beliefs and desires on the basis of which he may rationally act. However, as we also saw above, the doctrine of divine simplicity seems to require that God be *eternal* – be a timeless being. And now an objection looms. Arguably, psychological states like belief and desire necessarily have temporal duration, and thus require a temporal setting. But then the claim that there exists an eternal personal God appears to generate a contradiction: God must be timeless, and yet cannot be timeless.

There are various further internal objections relating to divine personhood and eternity – for example:

1. that being a person involves being capable of change, but change in turn requires that the being in question be temporal;
2. that the possibility of performing actions (arguably a condition of personhood) requires that God be located in time, for actions require a temporal setting. Pike, for

example, argues that “a timeless individual could not *produce, create, or bring about* an object, circumstance, or state of affairs” since that would involve temporally locating the agent’s action (Pike 1970, p. 110);

3. that being a person requires having a mind, and “the quickest and most direct way of showing the absurdity of a timeless mind is as follows: a mind is conscious, and consciousness is a temporally elongated process.” (Gale 1991, p. 52.)

There are also *nonsense* objections that focus on the combination of divine personhood and eternity, on which the suggestion that God is a timeless, unchanging being who is also an agent capable of performing actions is held, not to involve a contradiction, but to drift into *incoherence*. Bede Rundle for example, says: “I can get no grip on the idea of an agent doing something where the doing, the bringing about, is not an episode in time, something involving a changing agent” (2004, p. 77).

Some theists, in response to these kinds of objection, have dropped one or other of the divine attributes in question. You might drop timelessness in order to maintain attributes required for personhood. For example, Nicholas Wolterstorff drops timelessness in order to accommodate the biblical thought that, among things, God, as a person, planned certain things and remembers certain things – God’s “planning must occur before the planned event occurs. For otherwise it is not a case of planning” (2007, p. 164). Alternatively, a theist might drop personhood to maintain timelessness.

Another response, other than dropping one of the divine attributes of personhood and timelessness, would be to maintain that “person,” “action,” and so on, when applied to God, mean something other than what these terms usually mean when applied to human beings. One possibility here is to insist that, when used to describe God, such language should be understood not literally but analogically. God is not *literally* a person, at least not in the usual sense of the term, but he is, in certain crucial respects, *person-like*, and so on.

However, there is also the possibility of tackling such objections head-on, as it were, and maintaining that God can be *literally* both a person, with all that that entails, and also timeless, without contradiction. For example, with regards to the problem generated by the thought that God, as a person, must have beliefs and desires, and that these in turn require a temporal setting, some have responded by trying to show that what is essential so far as the holding of beliefs is concerned is that the being having *duration, there being a kind of duration that is non-temporal*. The view that God’s knowledge and belief involves a form of non-temporal duration is taken by Eleanor Wolterstorff and Norman Kretzmann in their “Eternity” (1981, esp. p. 446).

Omnipotence: The Stone Objection, and Other Problems

There is a variety of internal objections regarding the omnipotence of God including, as we have seen, the Riddle of the Stone. Other internal objections include:

1. God, if omnipotent, has the *power to make himself non-omnipotent*. But, being *necessarily* omnipotent, God must lack the power to make himself non-omnipotent. Therefore, there exists no such omnipotent God.

2. God, if omnipotent, has the *power to do evil*. But God, being essentially morally perfect, is incapable evil. Therefore, God does not exist.
3. God, if omnipotent, can *cause himself not to exist*. But God, being a necessary being, cannot do this. Therefore there is no God.
4. God, if omnipotent, possesses the *power to create another omnipotent being*. But it is impossible for there to be more than one omnipotent being (the existence of one omnipotent being limits the power of all other beings – for example, if God being omnipotent, has the power to cause me to sneeze now, there can't be another omnipotent being with the power to prevent me from sneezing now, because God would then lack a power that, being omnipotent, he has). But a being lacking the power to create another omnipotent being is not omnipotent. Therefore, there exists no such being.

There are also *external* objections to theism including:

5. Omnipotence and *free will*. Most theists believe in what's sometimes called *libertarian free will*. That's to say, they believe individuals can perform free actions, these being actions that are not caused or determined by anything outside of that individual, including God. But God, if omnipotent, would have the power to control our free choices. So, given we *can* make such free choices (this being something to which many theists are committed), God does not exist.
6. Omnipotence and *the unalterability of the past*. Most theists accept that the past is unalterable. God might have prevented life emerging on Planet Earth, and he might now snuff that life out, but he can't make it true that life never emerged if it already has. But if there's no being that can change the past in this way, then there is no omnipotent being, and so no God.
7. Similarly, given the unalterability of the past, God can't make it the case now Donald Trump is eating cake *for the first time* given that Trump has already eaten cake.

Note that not only does God lack the power to make Ted freely choose to be kind (objection 5 above), Ted himself *does* possess that power. Ted also has the power to do evil, and to destroy himself, these being other powers that God lacks. So, it appears there are beings, such as Ted, that possess powers God lacks.

How do theists respond to these objections?

Most of us, unversed in philosophy and theology, would probably say that omnipotence consists in something like *the power to do anything*, as Peter Geach (1973) notes: "The English word omnipotent would ordinarily be taken to imply ability to do everything."

A few philosophers have been prepared to accept that God can indeed do anything – including the impossible. Descartes, for example, suggests God might create a square circle. However, most theistic philosophers have understood "omnipotence" in a more restricted way.

So how should omnipotence be understood? It appears all of the above objections can be dealt with by defining omnipotence as *maximal power to bring about states of affairs*⁵ – where this is in turn is understood as *an amount of power that it is impossible for any other being to exceed* (see Hoffman & Rosenkrantz 2010).

Notice that this definition of omnipotence immediately deals with a wide variety of internal objections. Yes, God lacks the power to create square circles, or to create another omnipotent being (so that two omnipotent beings exist simultaneously), or to change the past. However, no possible being possesses such powers – because these are powers to bring about the impossible. God’s lacking those powers does not entail that he’s not omnipotent.

Nor does God’s omnipotence, defined as maximal power, require that he must possess the power to do anything that some *other* being can do. God possesses maximal power just in case his *total amount* of power exceeds that of any other possible being. However, that can be compatible with his lacking specific powers others possess. While the Grand High Wizard’s powers may vastly exceed those of any of his minions, his minions might still possess powers he lacks (perhaps some can touch their toes, and he can’t). Similarly then, God may be omnipotent, thus defined, even if it’s true that God lacks powers possessed by Ted, including the powers to do evil and self-destruct.

What of the Riddle of the Stone? Hoffman and Rosenkrantz (2010) point out that if God is *essentially* omnipotent, then his creating a stone so heavy he cannot lift it is impossible, because his omnipotence requires that there be no stone so heavy he cannot lift it (however, a being that is not essentially omnipotent might create a stone so heavy that they could not lift it. The being would be omnipotent when creating the stone, but, having created it, would no longer be omnipotent.) Again, on their understanding of omnipotence, an omnipotent God is not required to possess the power to do what is impossible.

So the definition of omnipotence as *maximal power* (as explained above) does appear to deal with the objections sketched out above. However, objections remain. For example, Sobel (2004, Chapter 10, esp. p. 362) argues that no being can be *essentially* omnipotent.

Logical Problem of Evil

As noted above, the logical problem of evil is an *external* objection. Theists are usually committed to two claims: the claim that God (defined as omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good) exists, and a claim about the world – that it contains evil. The suggestion is these two claims are logically inconsistent.

Note that talk of “evil,” in this context, is of two varieties of evil – *moral* evils: these being the morally bad things that persons do of their own free will, and *natural* evils, these being the natural diseases, disasters, and so on that befall the sentient inhabitants of this planet and cause them great suffering. The suggestion is that the existence of any evil *at all* – be it of either variety – *logically entails* the non-existence of God. Thus, according to Mackie (1955), belief in the existence of both God and evil is “positively irrational” (p. 200).

Alvin Plantinga’s “free will defense” (1974) provides the best-known response to the logical problem of evil. Plantinga’s response utilizes talk of “possible worlds,” a possible world being, roughly, a way reality might have been (the actual world being a possible world). Although I exist in the actual world there is a possible world in which I don’t exist (in which my parents never met, for example). There are, presumably, possible worlds in which the laws of nature are different, and even worlds in which the universe

does not exist (if the universe might not have existed). Necessary truths, on the other hand, including all mathematical and logical truths, are true with respect to every possible world. There's no possible world at which $2 + 2$ fails to equal 4.

Plantinga's approach to the logical problem turns on the thought that God will wish to create or actualize a possible world containing free agents – agents that are not antecedently caused or determined to do what they do but are capable of freely choosing whether to do good or evil. For only such a world can contain moral goodness.

However, if God creates a world containing free agents, then he can't, as it were, *compel* its inhabitants to do good. If the inhabitants are to be free, then they must be free to do evil. Given this freedom, there are possible worlds in which those free agents always choose to do good, not evil.

But then why can't God just actualize such a world? Why, in particular, can't God choose to actualize one of the possible worlds in which there is a free agent, but as a matter of fact that agent freely chooses always to do good, never evil, and so moral goodness, but not moral evil, exists? Plantinga now argues it is possible God lacks this freedom.

Because God can't compel the free inhabitants of any world he has created not to do evil, it may be that in any possible world containing free agents that God might choose to create, some evil exists (i.e. evil that created by those free agents acting freely).

Why suppose it's possible that any world God might create that contains a free agent will also be a world in which some evil exists? Well it is *possible*, argues Plantinga, that free agents suffer from what he calls "transworld depravity." It may be that no matter what circumstances God might put a given free agent in, that agent will always take at least one wrong action, and so some evil will exist.

Of course, Plantinga doesn't claim to have shown that free agents *do* suffer from transworld depravity. However, he points out it is *possible* that they do – it's possible that in any world actualized by God in which a free agent exists, some evil will also exist. But if that is possible, then *there is no logical inconsistency in supposing God has created a world containing some evil*. It may be that some evil is the price God must inevitably pay to allow for moral goodness.

Mackie is unconvinced by Plantinga's treatment of the logical problem of evil. Mackie argues that there is a plausible position on free will – compatibilism – on which free actions may nevertheless be causally determined. In which case, God *can* choose to create a world in which free agents and moral goodness exist, but no evil exists because those free agents are caused always to do the right thing. Plantinga responds by rejecting compatibilist accounts of free will.

There is a fairly broad consensus that the logical problem of evil has now largely been dealt with by Plantinga and subsequent developments. Sobel (2004), however, disputes this.

The Hiddenness Argument

For many, God is largely hidden. We fail to find good evidence for his existence. Nor does God directly reveal himself to us (via a religious experience, say). Consequently, given this the degree of "divine hiddenness," many of us fail to believe. But surely God, if he exists, would want us to believe in him?

An argument against theism based on divine hiddenness has been developed articulated in some detail by J.L. Schellenberg (2006). Schellenberg's original argument, in his book *Divine Hiddenness and Human Reason* (first published 1993) might be summarized as follows:

1. There are people who are capable of relating personally to a perfectly loving God but who, through no fault of their own, fail to believe.
2. If there is a perfectly loving God, then there are no such people.
3. Therefore, there is no such God.

Because he maintains that God would be perfectly loving, Schellenberg concludes that God does not exist. Note that premise (1) concerns the existence of what might be called inculpable or non-resistant nonbelievers:⁶ individuals who do not willfully aim to shut the door on any relationship with God that might be on offer, but who nevertheless fail to believe. There appear to be such people. Indeed, not only do there appear to be nonbelievers who aren't resistant to belief, it seems many actually want to believe.

Why suppose premise (2) is true? Schellenberg argues that a perfectly loving God will want to enter into a personal relationship with each of us. However, we can only enter into such a relationship if we believe God exists. Hence God, if he exists, will ensure that each of us believes in him (unless, of course, we are resistant). It is only if we believe God exists that the possibility of our entering into a relationship with God opens up to us.

Is this an external *logical* objection to theism? It can be. To qualify as an external logical objection, as I have defined it, the objection must be that the theist's belief in the existence of non-resistant nonbelievers is *logically incompatible* with their theism. Now, as I note below, not all theists accept that there are non-resistant nonbelievers. For such theists, then, the above argument is not a "logical objection" to their theism. Still, many theists do accept that non-resistant non-belief exists. Is this, then, a logical objection to their theism? It depends on the status of the second premise. A variety of hiddenness arguments are possible. We might argue that the existence of a perfectly loving God *logically entails* there will be no non-resistant nonbelievers. If that is the argument, then this is indeed an external logical objection (so far as it is aimed at theists who accept non-resistant non-belief exists). However, we might instead merely argue that it is *improbable* that a perfectly loving god would allow non-resistant non-belief. If that is the argument, then the above argument is an evidential objection to theism. Schellenberg offers both forms of argument.⁷

Theists might respond to logical version of the hiddenness argument in a number of ways. In particular, they may: (i) refuse to accept that non-resistant non-belief exists, (ii) reject that principle that belief non-resistant non-belief is logically incompatible with belief in a perfectly loving God, or (iii) give up belief in a perfectly loving God.

As we have already noted, some theists do deny that resistant non-belief exists. Some maintain that, in a sense, non-belief does not exist. All of us know, at *some* level, that God exists. We merely choose to suppress this knowledge. Alternatively, theists may allow that some of us don't know that God exists, but that our lack of knowledge is due to our own resistance. Difficulties with such responses include the fact that there's good

empirical evidence some of us really are non-resistantly ignorant of God's existence, including those of us who have never even encountered theistic belief, for example.

Some theists may be prepared to accept that God is not perfectly loving. However, the most popular response to the hiddenness is to reject premise (2). Some theists maintain, for example, that God might be justified in allowing non-resistant non-belief in order to achieve certain greater goods. Michael Murray (2002), for example, argues that were God to make his existence clearer to us, so that reasonable, non-resistant non-belief was no longer possible, then we would no longer have the opportunity to develop good characters for which we are ourselves responsible.

Others (the so-called *skeptical theists*) maintain that whether or not we can think of a reason that would justify God in allowing non-resistant non-belief, there could still be a reason. In fact, *for all we know*, there is such a reason. Our mere inability to think of such a reason fails to provide us with good grounds for believing no such reason exists (this, it's suggested, would be a faulty *no see um* inference – akin to arguing that if I can't see any insects in my garage, then there probably aren't any insects in my garage). In any case, given there could be such a reason, there can be no logical inconsistency in believing both that God is perfectly loving and that non-resistant non-belief exists. In response, Schellenberg reverses this logic: if Schellenberg has, as he claims, successfully shown that belief in a perfect being is incompatible with belief in non-resistant belief, then he *has* shown that there's no adequate reason for God to allow non-resistant non-belief (2015, p. 111).

Verificationist and Falsificationist Objections

We have already briefly discussed A. J. Ayer's verificationist objection to theism. Ayer (1936) wields his verification principle to try to show that the statement

God exists

is not false but meaningless. We have also seen that responses to such nonsense objections include (i) rejecting the criterion of nonsense of meaningfulness being applied (in this case, the verification principle), and (ii) maintaining that, whether or not the proposed criterion is correct, the statement in any case meets it.

The verification principle is certainly a highly contentious philosophical principle. A standard theistic objection to it is that the principle is self-undermining. For, it's claimed, the verification principle is itself neither an analytic nor observationally verifiable, and so, by its own lights, meaningless.

However, while the verification principle is not analytic, is it true that it is otherwise unverifiable? Meaning and observation appear to be linked. The meaning of our public language is unavoidably taught and learned through observation. But then might not some empirically very well-confirmed theory of meaning have the verification principle, or something like it, as a consequence? In which case, the principle might also be empirically confirmed.

Whether or not such a case might be made, Ayer himself provides no grounds in *Language Truth and Logic* for supposing his principle is true. The principle merely functions as an assumption. Theists are entirely within their rights, then, to point out

that Ayer's case in *Language Truth and Logic* for supposing "God exists" is meaningless rests on a principle that is both highly controversial and for which he provides no argument.

One ambiguity with the verification principle is: *who* must be in a position empirically to verify the statement if it is to qualify as meaningful? An actual human being? But then the principle seems too strong. Consider the statement:

A dinosaur walked across that very spot exactly 200 million years ago.

This, surely, is a meaningful statement. However, it may well be that no actual human being will ever be in a position to verify it. Obviously, there were no humans around 200 million years ago to verify it. And, given the amount of time that has elapsed, it may be impossible for us actual humans to verify it now or in the future.

If, on the other hand, we allow merely possible beings, human or not, to count as verifiers, then God, as a possible being, is presumably in a position to verify all sorts of things, including his own existence (as Keith Ward has pointed out [1982]). In which case the statement that God exists is not unverifiable.

Further, John Hick (1966, p. 195) points out that while we actual human beings may not *currently* be able to verify that God exists, it may be that we can do so in the future – after we die. Thus what Hick calls an "eschatological" verification remains a possibility.

Finally, it is by no means clear that we actual humans cannot verify, now, that God exists. Might not, say, arguments from design provide us with good grounds for supposing God exists by pointing to the fact that God best explains certain observed features of the universe? Or, on the other hand, might not the evidential problem of evil provide us with good grounds for supposing that whatever, if anything, created the universe, it is not God?

If, in response it were suggested that only a *direct* observation of God can verify his existence (that's not a suggestion Ayer makes, by the way), and God can't be directly observed, then again our verification principle will be too strong as surely scientists are able meaningfully to posit the existence of all sorts of things that cannot be directly observed: subatomic particles for example.

An even tougher criterion of meaningfulness suggests that a statement is meaningful only if it can be *falsified* – that's to say, only if some possible experience might give us good grounds for supposing the statement is false. Note that the verification principle allows two ways in which non-analytic statements might satisfy the principle's necessary condition of meaningfulness: the condition is met if there could be observational grounds for supposing the statement is true, *or* observational grounds for supposing the statement is false. The suggestion now is that there must be potential observational grounds for supposing the statement is false. Observational grounds for supposing the statement is true won't do. So, in effect, we are setting the bar higher than Ayer for a statement to qualify as meaningful.

Antony Flew seems to suggest something like this principle in his short paper "Theology and Falsification" (1950). Flew begins with a well-known parable of John Wisdom's: the parable of the gardener.

Once upon a time two explorers came upon a clearing in the jungle. In the clearing were growing many flowers and many weeds. One explorer says, "Some gardener must tend

this plot.” The other disagrees, “There is no gardener.” So they pitch their tents and set a watch. No gardener is ever seen. “But perhaps he is an invisible gardener.” So they set up a barbed-wire fence. They electrify it. They patrol with bloodhounds. (For they remember how H. G. Wells’s *The Invisible Man* could be both smelt and touched though he could not be seen.) But no shrieks ever suggest that some intruder has received a shock. No movements of the wire ever betray an invisible climber. The bloodhounds never give cry. Yet still the Believer is not convinced. “But there is a gardener, invisible, intangible, insensible to electric shocks, a gardener who has no scent and makes no sound, a gardener who comes secretly to look after the garden which he loves.” At last the Sceptic despairs, “But what remains of our original assertion? Just how does what you call an invisible, intangible, eternally elusive gardener differ from an imaginary gardener or even from no gardener at all?” (Flew, and McIntyre 1964, p.99)

In this example, suggests Flew, something that starts out as an assertion is gradually reduced, step by step, to something else. The assertion suffers “the death of a thousand qualifications” as what might potentially have counted as evidence against the assertion is discounted until in the end, nothing at all is allowed to discount what’s assertion. At this point, suggests Flew, nothing is being asserted. Flew suggests that similarly, when religious people assert such things as that God loves us as a father loves his children, that God has a plan, and so on, and skeptics point out what looks to be strong evidence against such claims, the religious tend endlessly to explain away that evidence in much the same way as the defender of belief in an invisible gardener. That’s to say, they endlessly qualify their assertions so as to immunize them against empirical refutation. But then such claims similarly end up dying the death of a thousand qualifications. In the end, nothing is asserted at all (and so what the theist says at least ends up at least lacking any *assertoric* meaning).

Is Flew’s criticism fair? R. M. Hare responds with his own parable:

A certain lunatic is convinced that all dons want to murder him. His friends introduce him to all the mildest and most respectable dons that they can find, and after each of them has retired, they say, “You see, he doesn’t really want to murder you; he spoke to you in a most cordial manner; surely you are convinced now?” But the lunatic replies “Yes, but that was only his diabolical cunning; he’s really plotting against me the whole time, like the rest of them; I know it I tell you.” However many kindly dons are produced, the reaction is still the same. (Flew and McIntyre 1964, p. 100)

Hare points out there is no behavior of the dons that this will accept as counting against his theory. Therefore, on Flew’s test, this person *asserts nothing*. But this seems wrong: we consider such a person a lunatic, as being deluded about something. We *disagree with him*. If he made no assertion, no such disagreement would exist.

Hare points out there is no behavior of the dons that this person will accept as counting against his theory. Therefore, on Flew’s test, this person asserts nothing. But this conclusion seems wrong: we consider such a person mistaken. We disagree with him. If he made no assertion, no disagreement would be possible.

Young Earth Creationism provides another apparent counter-example. Many Young Earth Creationists won’t let anything count against their theory that the universe is only around 6,000 years old. Whatever evidence is provided against their theory (the fossil

record, light from distant stars, etc.) is, in one way or another, explained away. Should we conclude, then, that when such a Young Earth Creationist says, “the Universe is only a few thousand years old” they fail to assert anything at all? Surely not. But then falsifiability, as a criterion of meaningfulness (or at least of meaningful *assertion*), is too strong.

Also, notice that some theists would not answer “nothing” to the question: What, if anything, might show that your belief in God is false? In which case, even if Flew’s criterion of meaningful assertion were correct, it would in any case fail establish that *this* sort of theist failed to assert anything by saying “God exists.”

Conclusion

There is a vast array of logical objections to theism. By no means all have been considered here. New objections will no doubt emerge. Do any succeed?

We have seen how, with some ingenuity, it is always possible to find a way round an internal or external logical objection, by, say, tweaking your definition of God, finding some fault in the logic, or, in the case of external objections, giving up one of your other beliefs. Does this mean that *all logical objections fail*?

In so far as such objections force theists to *revise their position*, no. What these objections target are very specific conceptions of God (sometimes in combination with other beliefs) and, in many cases, the theism that involves those very specific conceptions must, on pain of contradiction, be abandoned (or else the other beliefs abandoned). The *target* theistic belief or belief-combination is sometimes successfully refuted.

Theists sometimes acknowledge this. However, other varieties of theism, very loosely understood, always remain on the table. So the theist can always switch to one of those other varieties. For example a theist convinced by logical objections to a personal God may, in response, switch to a non-personal conception of God. Indeed, the theist may insist that one of the other varieties of God was always what they had in mind. They’ve just been misunderstood, and/or have themselves been unclear about the character of the God they believe in.⁸

From the perspective of the theist, this strategy of switching and adjusting belief in response to such objections constitutes *progress* in getting clear about what theism fundamentally involves. Such logical objections are *helpful* to theism, they say, by allowing theists to *clarify the nature of God*.

From the perspective of many atheist critics, on the other hand, these same logical objections are in many cases a *threat* to theism, and the theistic strategy of switching, modifying, and/or abandoning beliefs in order to retain at least some sort of logically consistent theistic belief looks suspiciously like, not clarification, but rather a merry-go-round of evasion.

Which of these two perspectives is the more accurate is, I suspect, the fundamental question to press regarding logical (and indeed evidential) objections to theism.

Notes

- 1 I assume for the purposes of this essay that contradictions cannot be true, though note that some, including Graham Priest (2006), argue that some contradictions can be true (and, simultaneously, false).

- 2 Note the argument is not that the evil we observe provides good *evidence* against the existence of God, making the existence of God less *probable*. That is the evidential problem of evil. (See Chapter 13: Evidential Objections to Theism.)
- 3 Of course, in suggesting that the theist can solve the logical problem of evil by dropping any one of the three classical omni-attributes, I am assuming those omni-attributes are logically independent, which is contentious. If omnipotence logically requires omniscience, say, then the theist does *not* have the option of dropping omniscience *alone*. They would have to drop omnipotence too.
- 4 This example is adapted from one provided by Linda Zagzebski in her entry to *Stanford Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* on “Foreknowledge and Freewill” (2017).
- 5 Note that, for technical reasons, Hoffman and Rosenkrantz prefer to characterize omnipotence not in terms of performing tasks, but in terms of bringing about certain states of affairs.
- 6 Note that in later developments of the argument, Schellenberg (2015) switches from talk of inculpable belief to talk of non-resistant belief, acknowledging that one might somehow be culpable – be to blame – for one’s failure to believe in God even if one is not aiming deliberately to shut the door on any relationship with God that might be on offer (pp. 54–55). It is the latter “resistant” form of non-belief that Schellenberg maintains is incompatible with the existence of a perfectly loving God.
- 7 Schellenberg has suggested to me in correspondence that his (2015) volume presents an argument that belief in perfectly loving god is *incompatible* with belief in non-resistant believers, whereas elsewhere – e.g., in his (1993) book and in his (2004) paper – he argues only that it is *actually* false that God would permit non-resistant non-belief or that non-resistant non-belief provides at least *evidence* against the existence of a perfectly loving god.
- 8 They may use “God” as a label for something they first encounter *through a glass darkly*, as it were (Paul uses the phrase in 1 Corinthians 13: 12). Thus the subject matter of their belief – the God they “have in mind” – can remain a constant, even while the beliefs they hold about the subject matter may undergo considerable revision. Compare: suppose I introduce “Tim” as a label for *him* – *that* person I now see dimly through a mist; it’s still Tim I have in mind when I later admit that much of what I first believed about Tim (based on his misty appearance) was incorrect.

References

- Ayer, A. (1936) *Language, Truth, and Logic*. London: Victor Gollancz.
- Boethius, A. (1999) *The Consolation of Philosophy*, rev. edn. London: Penguin.
- Flew, A. (1950) “Theology and falsification.” *University* 1. Reprinted in Flew and MacIntyre (1964), pp. 99–103.
- Flew, A., and MacIntyre, A. (eds.) *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*. New York: Macmillan, 1964.
- Gale, R. (1991) *On the Nature and Existence of God*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Geach, P. (1973) “Omnipotence.” *Philosophy* 48: 7–20.
- Hick, J. (1966) *Faith and Knowledge*, 2nd edn. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Hoffman, J. and Rosenkrantz, G. (2010) “Omnipotence,” in C. Taliaferro, P. Draper, and P. Quinn (eds.) *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 243–250.
- Mackie, J. (1955) “Evil and omnipotence.” *Mind* 64: 200–212.
- Maimonides, M. (1996) *The Eight Chapters of Maimonides on Ethics (Semonah Perakim)*, ed., trans., and annotated with an Introduction by J. Gorfinkle. New York: AMS Press.
- Miller, B. (1996) *A Most Unlikely God*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

- Murray, M. (2002) "Deus absconditus," in D. Howard-Snyder and P. Moser (eds.) *Divine Hiddenness: New Essays*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 62–82.
- Oppy, G. (2003) "The devilish complexities of divine simplicity," *Philo* 6: 10–22.
- Pike, N. (1970) *God and Timelessness*. New York: Schocken.
- Plantinga, A. (1974) *The Nature of Necessity*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Priest, G. (2006). *In Contradiction: A Study of the Transconsistent*, 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rundle, B. (2004) *Why There is Something Rather than Nothing*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Schellenberg, J. (2004) "Does divine hiddenness justify atheism?" in M. Peterson and R. Van Arragon (eds.) *Contemporary Debates in the Philosophy of Religion*. Oxford: Blackwell. 30–41.
- Schellenberg, J. (2006) *Divine Hiddenness and Human Reason*, 2nd edn. Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Schellenberg, J. (2015). *The Hiddenness Argument. Philosophy's New Challenge to Belief in God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sobel, J. (2004) *Logic and Theism: Arguments For and Against belief in God*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stump, E. (1997) "Simplicity," in P. Quinn and C. Taliaferro (eds.) *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Stump, E. and Kretzmann, N. (1981) "Eternity." *Journal of Philosophy* 78: 429–458.
- Ward, K. (1982) *Holding Fast to God: A Reply to Don Cupitt*. London: SPCK.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1953) *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. Anscombe, ed. G. Anscombe and R. Rhees. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wolterstorff, N. (2007) "God is everlasting," in M. Peterson, W. Hasker, B. Reichenbach, and D. Basinger (eds.) *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*, 3rd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zagzebski, L. (2017) "Foreknowledge and freewill," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at: <https://platos.tanfordplato.stanford.edu/entries/free-will-foreknowledge/> (accessed 12 September 2018).

Evidential Objections to Theism

HERMAN PHILIPSE

Many Christian and Muslim monotheists still endorse the contention of the apostle Paul that unbelievers are “without excuse,” since there would be sufficient evidence in the world for God’s existence and his “invisible nature” (Romans 1: 20). According to contemporary atheists such as me, however, the evidence available today *against* God’s existence vastly overwhelms the alleged evidence *pro*, if there can be evidence at all for such a thing. Therefore, well-informed and intellectually honest human beings should become atheists. The aim of this article is to present some of the main evidential objections to theism. Before doing so, the topic should be defined more precisely. Which god or monotheism are we talking about? How can any evidence be relevant to the question whether the god of theism exists?

Defining the Topic

During the long (pre) history of humanity, many different gods have been worshipped. As far as we know, all established religions were polytheistic until about the seventh century BCE. The first recorded (quasi-) monotheist was Amenhotep IV or Akhenaten, an Ancient Egyptian pharaoh and religious revolutionary in the fourteenth century BCE. He proclaimed the Sun-god Aten as the sole god of Egypt, but his successors eagerly abolished Atenism again. Ancient passages in the Old Testament also refer to many gods, such as Psalm 82: 1: “God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment.” Early Jewish religious creeds were not strictly monotheistic, then, but rather “henotheistic.” This is defined as the belief that many gods exist, only one of whom should be worshipped by the members of the relevant community. In contrast, real monotheisms are religious creeds according to which there is only one god. Monotheists are atheists concerning all gods except one.

This is why in the Roman empire they were considered to be intolerant and dangerous. Monotheists may be called “excepting atheists,” in contradistinction to “universal atheists” such as me, who hold that no god whatsoever exists.

I defined “monotheisms” in the plural, because the unique god a monotheist believes in can be characterized in different ways, which may be mutually incompatible. For example, the philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) conceived of *Deus* as an all-embracing deterministic substance with infinitely many attributes, two of which are thought and extension. Since his pan-en-theistic version of monotheism was considered to be incompatible with Judaism and with Christianity, Spinoza has been condemned by both the Talmud Torah congregation of Amsterdam in 1656, and by Christians, as an abominably heretic atheist. In that context, the term “atheist” was used in a third sense, which may be dubbed “particular atheism.” It refers to those who deny explicitly the existence of a specific god.

The variety of monotheism to be discussed in this chapter is called “theism.” According to the standard version of theism, which is common to theistic Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, God exists independently of the material universe we are living in, because he created it. Since this god is considered to be a purely spiritual being without a body, theists cannot teach us to which individual they are referring when using the proper name “God” by pointing to its referent. Consequently, they can fix the reference of the name “God” only by describing the nature of the god they believe in.

If we try to discover, however, who is the god whose existence is endorsed by monotheist believers today, and ask them to describe this god, their answers often are too vague to be informative. So-called negative theologians even claim that God is so different from everything he created that we cannot describe his nature by using any positive predicates of human language. If we would experience somehow the presence of this god, our experiences will be “ineffable.” Unfortunately for believers, it would follow that we can have no idea whatsoever to what or whom the proper name “God” refers, and what it means to say that such a god exists.

In order to avoid the ensuing emptiness of content in this article, I adopt a traditional definition of theism, according to which God is “a person without a body (i.e. a spirit) who ... is eternal, perfectly free, omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good, and the creator of all things” (Swinburne 2004, p. 7). Furthermore, I shall assume for the sake of argument that most of the predicates that characterize the god of theism are used literally, and not analogously to a large extent, so that we can understand what is meant by this theistic characterization of God (cf. Swinburne 2016).

Having defined “monotheism”, “theism,” and “God,” let us elucidate briefly the notion of evidence. The evidence for or against a specific thesis or theory consists of empirically known facts that render it more or less probable that this thesis is true. If we want to make up our mind conscientiously about the (epistemic) probability that a specific factual claim is true, we should take into account all available evidence *pro* and *contra*. This requirement is often called the *principle of total evidence*. It may be that with regard to a specific claim the total evidence available is insufficient for concluding anything significant about the probability that the thesis is true. If so, further research is needed in order to discover new empirical evidence. In the meantime we should remain agnostic.

My task in this chapter is merely to sum up the main evidence available against theism. In order to make up your mind conscientiously about the probability that theism is true, much more would be needed. For example, one should also present the evidence in favor of theism, if any, and use a sound method for appraising the importance of different pieces of evidence for and against its truth. Furthermore, one should make an inventory of competing explanations of the same evidential items, and try to decide reasonably whether one of these competing explanations is not more probably true, or at least more credible, than theism. Finally, one should try to establish objectively the prior probability of theism (see below). Some training in Bayesian probability theory may be helpful, but I cannot explain here the many technical issues involved (cf. Philipse 2012).

Religious believers often fail to distinguish between the evidence concerning a specific religious belief and the usefulness of holding it. However, these two aspects should be separated sharply. Evidence is related to the truth of a belief or thesis, as defined above. Usefulness regards the mental and other effects of someone's believing something. Psychologists have discovered, for example, that most of us have self-serving biases, which enhance our happiness and self-esteem. Holding specific false beliefs may be useful in the sense that it has positive psychological effects. Endorsing religious beliefs might be salutary in this sense, but it may also be detrimental to oneself or to others. Our topic in this chapter is the evidence relevant to theistic belief, not the usefulness or harmfulness of believing.

Theism's Prior Probability and Predictive Power

Evidential Objection 1: the Argument from Neuroscience

Having elucidated the notions of God, theism, and evidence, we should wonder how any empirical evidence could be relevant to the truth of theism. This may be the case in two ways. Using the terminology of Bayesianism, we might call them theism's prior probability (or prior, for short), and its predictive power. The predictive power of theism with regard to a specific item of empirical evidence e_1 may be formalized as $P(e_1 | h \& k)$, often called the likelihood of hypothesis h with regard to this piece of evidence. What the formula expresses is how (im)probable (P) it is that evidence e_1 would occur if hypothesis h were true, assuming background knowledge k . Let me stress that this formula does not imply anything yet about the probability that hypothesis h itself is true; it merely specifies what the probability of a piece of evidence would be if h were true. The prior probability of a hypothesis, on the other hand, is symbolized as $P(h | k)$, that is, the probability that hypothesis h is true given background knowledge k .

In the case of theism, there is crucial empirical evidence against its truth that can better be presented in terms of prior probability than as an instance of low predictive power. For example, the god of theism is defined as "a person without a body," that is, a bodiless spirit, who has impressive mental properties, such as knowing everything that can be known (omniscience). As is shown by an overwhelming amount of recent research in animal biology, psychology, and the neurosciences, however, mental phenomena can exist only on the basis of corresponding neural substrata.

The more advanced the mental powers and performances of a being are, the more complex are the cerebral structures and brain-processes on which they depend. If we damage or destroy these brain-processes, the mental activities are not possible any more.

Given this body of empirical background knowledge k , the hypothesis of theism has a prior probability $P(h|k)$ near to zero, since it stipulates that God not only is omniscient but also is a bodiless spirit. As I argued elsewhere, philosophical or religious rejoinders to the effect that neuroscientific evidence cannot be relevant to the truth of theism, since it is concerned merely with features of the created world, are unconvincing (Philipse 012, §§11.5–10). The argument against theism from neuroscience is my first evidential objection to theism. It is a strong objection indeed. If the prior of theism is near to zero, we need an overwhelming amount of evidence in favor of theism in order to justify endorsing it.

The Dilemma of Theism's Predictive Power

In what follows, I focus mainly on evidence concerning theism that is related to its predictive power. How can we decide which evidence is relevant to the truth of theism in this respect, and how should we determine the values of $P(e_n|h&k)$ for instances of empirical evidence e_n ? According to theism (as hypothesis h), God is both omniscient and omnipotent. It follows that he can and will achieve everything he intends to achieve. In other words, for each piece of evidence e_i the value of $P(e_i|h&k)$ will depend merely on the probability that God intended to cause or create e_i either directly or indirectly. It is a crucial question how we can determine this probability of God's specific intentions, if at all, since in attempting to answer it we are facing a difficult dilemma.

Either we just assume that God intended to create our world exactly as it is, so that the value of $P(e_i|h&k)$ for every e_i equals 1 (the range of possible values of P being defined as $0 \leq P \leq 1$). If we do so, however, evidential arguments for theism amount to nothing but a verbal *petitio principii* (begging the question). Furthermore, evidential arguments against theism will be impossible by definition, since we derive the content and probability of God's particular intentions merely from our knowledge of what exists in fact. Or, if we want to avoid this first and trivializing option, we have to establish the probabilities that God intended to create specific aspects of the world e_i on other grounds than the factual existence of these aspects. But how can we have epistemic access to God's intentions independently from the existing world? Alleged divine revelations are notoriously unreliable in this respect (cf. Philipse 2012, §§1.1–1.3).

The standard solution to this problem of predictive power for theism is to refer to God's goodness. According to the theistic conception of God, this divine person is not only perfectly free but also perfectly good, and the term "good" is understood in the sense of morally good. Accordingly, if it is morally good to create at all, God will always decide freely to cause or create the ethically best things possible, or at least very good things if, given an infinite range of ever better possibilities, there is no best thing of a certain kind.

This traditional solution to the problem of theism's predictive power works only if we humans are able to grasp God's criteria for the goodness of his divine actions. One might

object that it is highly unlikely that we humans are able to know and understand the moral norms that hold for God, if there are such norms at all. Since we humans are vulnerable and mortal group animals, the moral norms we know of, and which hold for us humans, serve group cohesion, survival, procreation, and the happiness of finite beings like us. It is very unlikely that God would use this human morality for steering his own actions, since he is an invulnerable, immortal, omniscient, and omnipotent being, who is unique in his kind. If such a god would apply moral norms to himself at all, the content of these norms would differ radically from human ethics.

Nevertheless, theists typically assume that God's perfect goodness means that he is as morally good as possible, and that the norms defining this goodness resemble the norms of human morality to a large extent. More in particular, God would feel and act towards us humans as a perfect father, and love each of us accordingly. For the sake of argument, I shall endorse this anthropomorphic assumption. Without it, theism would lack any predictive power, so that apart from Objection 1 and other factors determining theism's low prior, the evidential issue concerning theism would be a red herring.

Given God's goodness so understood, which empirical phenomena are clearly less likely if theism were true than if no god exists, so that they constitute evidential objections against theism? Let me list some of them in this article. I use the term "naturalism" for the view that no god or other supernatural being exists.

Evidential Objection 2: Divine Hiddenness

If theism were true, and God were like a perfectly loving father, one would expect that he reveals himself unambiguously to each of his "children" – that is, to all human beings – early in their youth, as good fathers do. However, this did not happen in the past, and it does not occur today. As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, monotheism arose quite late in human (pre) history. As far as we know, all early human religions were polytheistic. If we assume that the burial rites practiced by Neanderthals around 100,000 years ago were religiously motivated, we should conclude that these humans were able already to conceive of gods. Nevertheless, as far as we know, there was no revelation of the god of theism to them, nor to any other human being living before some 2,700 years ago. It follows that if the god of theism really exists, he was hiding himself to all humans during at least some 97,300 years. Even theistic believers often complained that God never disclosed himself to them. As we read in Isaiah (45:15), "thou art a God who hidest thyself."

The evidential objection of "divine hiddenness" may be summarized as follows (cf. Schellenberg 2006; 2015a; 2015b). If the perfectly loving god of theism (called God) exists, he will behave as a good father to all of his children, that is, to all human beings. This implies, among other things, that God will reveal himself to all of us early in our youth, as good fathers do, in order to enable us to establish a personal and reciprocal relationship with him. Clearly, no personal relation with God is possible unless one believes that God exists. Since God is omnipotent, he is able to donate belief in his existence to all humans. God will prevent that any human being is ever "non-resistantly in a state of non-belief in relation to the proposition that God exists" (Schellenberg's jargon). But during at least 97,300 years probably there was no human belief that God exists at all. Even now, many open-minded human beings have no inkling that God as

defined by theism exists. From this rampant absence of human belief in God it follows that the perfectly loving god of theism does not exist. Or at least, $P(\text{absence of belief in God} | \text{theism} \& k)$ is very low indeed. The same conclusion would follow already if there were *only one* human being who is non-resistantly in a state of non-belief with regard to God's existence.

The usual label of this evidential objection against theism, "divine hiddenness," is somewhat misleading, since "the weakness of our evidence for God is not a sign that God is hidden; it is a revelation that God does not exist." In other words, "[t]he weakness of evidence for theism ... is itself evidence against it" (Schellenberg (2006, pp. 1–2)). It follows that those agnostics who hold that the empirical evidence *pro* and *contra* God's existence is of equal weight, should conclude that this very assessment "tips the balance in favor of atheism" (Schellenberg 2006, p. 212).

Theistic philosophers have tried to justify God's hiding himself from most human beings. They argue, for instance, that receiving clear evidence that God exists would limit your freedom and moral autonomy. However, their justifications of divine hiddenness are unconvincing, and sometimes morally dubious, such as the argument that absences of theistic belief are due to sinfulness of unbelievers (Schellenberg 2006, Part 2; Philipse 2012: §14.12).

Evidential Objection 3. The Argument from Locality

The evidential objection from locality against theism, also known as the argument from the Demographics of Non-belief, is a special version of the argument from divine hiddenness. It starts from the theistic claim that God is not only omniscient, perfectly good, and omnipotent, but also omnipresent, albeit bodiless. Clearly, if such a god existed and loved every human being, he would make himself known to all humans whenever and wherever they live. In fact, however, all alleged divine revelations occurred at a particular time and place in human history only. As a consequence, each theistic religion had a limited local origin, and its spread has been restricted demographically. Given God's assumed eternal omnipresence, the limited locality of alleged theistic communication with human beings amounts to strong evidence against the truth of theism (Maitzen 2006). A purely secular account of the origin and dissemination of religious beliefs explains their locality much better than theism can do, so that $P(\text{locality} | \text{naturalism} \& k) \gg P(\text{locality} | \text{theism} \& k)$.

The evidential objection of locality may be reinforced by many considerations. For example, if the god of theism exists, it would be blatantly unfair of him to restrict awareness of his presence to a subset of humans only. The very idea of "God's elect" is incompatible with God's alleged perfect goodness. God's unfairness would be even worse if he punishes non-resistant unbelievers during an afterlife for their lack of religious belief, as many Christians and Muslims proclaim. If there is any punishment for unbelief, an equal amount of evidence for theism should be available to each human being, at each epoch.

Objection 4. Cosmological Evidence against Theism

During the history of theism, many different types of cosmological arguments have been developed in order to support belief in God's existence. As I argued elsewhere (Phlipse 2012, Chapter 12), however, the most sophisticated versions of these

arguments are unconvincing. Even more problematic for religious believers is the fact that after cosmology developed into an empirical science during the twentieth century, quickly progressing empirical research revealed more and more aspects of our universe that do not square with the contention that the good god of theism created it. Consequently, there is an increasing amount of cosmological evidence against God's existence. Let me mention a few points only.

First, relative to the immense spatial extension of our ever-more-quickly expanding universe that is about 13.8 billion years old, planetary systems are rare, and planets inhabitable by life occur only in a small subset of these systems. Galaxy clusters are largely empty, and are separated from each other by immense voids. For example, the so-called Giant Void measures about 1.3 billion light years across. If there were an omnipotent god who is like a good father, who shares our moral values, and who had produced a universe primarily as a home for humans created in his image, our universe would have been very different indeed. Such a god would have created the geocentric universe imagined in Genesis and described by Aristotle in his book *On the Heavens*. Surely, God would have abstained from creating useless giant voids.

Second, when the first generation of stars and galaxies was formed in the universe, our carbon-based life could not exist, because there was no carbon yet. Only when early stars more massive than the sun burnt helium and hydrogen into heavier elements, such as carbon and iron, and exploded forming supernova events, the chemical elements needed for the origin of life were dispersed into space. About four billion years after the Big Bang planets started to exist that contained the chemical building blocks necessary for complex life. Surely, the omnipotent good god of theism would have created a universe in which complex life was possible from the very start, and not merely after the first generation of massive stars had exploded.

Third, religious apologists often contend that the first origin of life in our universe would be extremely improbable if there were no god who initiated it. Simple statistics show that this is mistaken, however. In our galaxy, the Milky Way, probably there are at least 100 billion planets. Astrophysicists estimate today that the number of galaxies in the universe is somewhere between 100 and 200 billion. Even if a spontaneous genesis of life on some planet in the universe would be extremely improbable, say the odds are about 100 billion to one against, there would be more than a 100 billion planets on which life would start. Not accidentally, we are living on such a planet (cf. Dawkins 2006, p. 138; I have adapted numbers to recent data).

Fourth, cosmologists now assume that our universe will continue to expand forever. It is not unlikely that a so-called heat death will finally result, which is predicted on the basis of the second law of thermodynamics. When the universe will have reached thermodynamic equilibrium at a very low temperature, no life will be possible any more, since all energy is evenly distributed. Because this state of the universe will last for an infinitely long time, it will persist during a period infinitely longer than the preceding finite period after the Big Bang. Hence, the fraction of time consisting of the period during which life is possible in the universe divided by the infinite time during which life will be impossible, equals zero. The good god of theism would never create such a universe.

One might doubt, I admit, whether the notion of entropy can be applied to the universe as a whole, and conclude on various grounds that this scenario is too speculative

to be considered as evidence. Yet it is not more speculative than the evidence theists typically adduce in favor of theism, such as in the argument from temporal order (Philipse 2012, §§13.1–2).

Evidential Objection 5: Evolution

The empirical evidence against theism discovered by evolutionary biology is even more impressive than the many pieces of cosmological evidence. Before Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, the conviction of authors such as William Paley was still dominant in Western culture. In his (1802) *Natural Theology*, Paley argued that in order to explain the well-functioning organisms of living beings, one cannot but assume that there is a divine designer or “watchmaker,” that is, God, who constructed the first specimens of each species on Earth. Darwin’s theory of evolution by blind mutations and natural selection not only eliminated the need for such a theological hypothesis. After its modern synthesis had emerged during the first half of the twentieth century, evolutionary biology developed into an encompassing research program that unifies the life sciences, and also yields overwhelming empirical evidence against theism.

The theory of natural selection assumes that, typically, populations of organisms tend to increase much quicker than their food and other supplies. When populations outgrow their resources, a struggle for existence occurs, during which some heritable traits produced by mutations may turn out to be more fitness-enhancing in the environmental setting than other traits. Some organisms survive whereas many others do not, and some of the surviving organisms procreate whereas many others do not. The diversification of biological species, the increasing complexity of living organisms after the origin of life on earth, and the late evolution of *homo sapiens*, are results of this slow and blind process of mutations and natural selection.

If the omnipotent and omniscient father-god of theism had decided to create humans by this cumbersome procedure, he would have been both wicked and incompetent. For example, more than 99% of the species that ever lived on earth became extinct. Furthermore, after the origin of life on earth it took about four billion years of evolution before *homo sapiens* emerged. Would God really have taken this excessively cruel evolutionary detour if, being an omnipotent good father, he had intended to create humans as his favored children? Clearly, $P(\text{evolution} \mid \text{naturalism\&k}) \gg P(\text{evolution} \mid \text{theism\&k})$.

Evidential Objection 6: Scientific Progress and Religious Retreat

Since Andrew Dickson White published his two-volume book *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* in 1896, historians of science have discussed to what extent the warfare metaphor is appropriate. Religiously inspired historians stressed many positive effects that both Islam and Christianity might have had on scientific progress. What cannot be denied, however, is that during the history of science in Europe from the 16th century onwards, scientific explanations have superseded theological accounts of numerous phenomena in empirical domains, from cosmology to human medicine and biology, because the former are vastly superior to the latter in terms of testable implications and other methodological virtues. As a result, theological

explanations are now considered to be intellectually illegitimate in every scientific or scholarly discipline.

This progressive elimination of religious explanations from empirical science is itself evidence against theism. If the omnipotent god of theism really existed and had created the universe, one would expect that real scientific progress would reveal ever more convincingly that all empirical data can best be explained, ultimately, by the overall hypothesis of theism. The reverse is the true, however, as I argued above with regard to cosmology and biology.

Let me mention just two other instances of scientific progress that caused, or should cause, religious retreat. Apart from Darwin's theory of evolution, the most celebrated case probably is that of Pierre Simon Laplace's improvements on Newtonian mechanics. In the General Scholium of his *Principia*, third book, Isaac Newton had claimed that the structure and stability of the solar system could be explained only by theism, since allegedly it was too improbable that the unidirectional and stable rotations of the planets around the sun were due to random change. Because Laplace explained these phenomena convincingly by recalculating the planetary orbits and by proposing his nebular hypothesis about the origin of the solar system, he could eliminate theism entirely from Newtonian mechanics. According to a famous anecdote, when Napoleon asked him in 1802 why God was not mentioned in his *Exposition du Système du Monde*, Laplace answered: "Sire, je n'ai pas besoin de cette hypothèse" (Your Majesty, I have no need of that hypothesis).

The second instance of scientific progress I'd like to mention is more recent, and is concerned with St. Paul's conversion to Christianity. As is related in Acts 9: 1–9, when Saul was on his way to Damascus, he suddenly and unexpectedly converted from being a prominent persecutor of Jesus's followers to Jesus's most influential apologist. According to the New Testament, this surprising conversion happened because Saul was blinded by a "great light from heaven" (Acts 22: 6–11), fell to the ground, and allegedly heard a voice speaking to him, saying "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," after which he remained blind during three days. Saul interpreted what happened to him as a supernatural intervention by the deceased Jesus, that is, as a miracle.

Recently it has been argued that the description of Saul's experience offers "a striking good match" to perceptions by eyewitnesses of asteroid fragments descending through the atmosphere of the earth (Hartmann 2015). Probably, Saul's blindness was caused by intense ultraviolet radiation triggered by such a fireball event. A shockwave produced by an explosion of the meteoroid in the air might explain the fact that "those who journeyed with" Saul "had all fallen to the ground" (Acts 26: 14). Since Saul and his contemporaries lacked scientific expertise about asteroids crashing on earth, they interpreted this extraordinary and disturbing physical event in terms of the religious beliefs available in their cultural context. Of course, the precise content of Saul's interpretation also requires a psychological explanation.

Generalizing from these and countless other examples we might conclude that all instances of particular empirical evidence for theism either do not exist, such as alleged miracles, or can be explained in principle by secular scientific accounts. Formulated in the terminology invented by Henry Drummond during his Lowell Lectures in Boston, 1893, all pieces of alleged empirical evidence *in favor* of theism boil down to "gaps" in our scientific knowledge, which believers "will fill up with God." The gradual

elimination of theistic explanations during the last centuries of scientific progress, that is, of these “God-of-the-gaps” accounts of empirical phenomena, is itself strong empirical evidence against God’s existence.

Evidential Objection 7: The Existence of Gratuitous Evil

The most traditional evidential objection against theism refers to the existence of evil on Earth. Surely, the omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good god of theism would not create or allow any evil in the universe, or at most merely evils that are indispensable means to greater goods. It is or seems to be obvious, however, that many evils in the past and present are not indispensable means to greater goods. Hence, they amount to empirical evidence against God’s existence.

The philosophical literature on the problem of evil is voluminous, and the issue has both an evidential and a normative dimension. Since Stephen Maitzen discusses moral evils in his article on “Normative Objections to Theism” (Chapter 14 of this volume) I zero in on natural evils only. Let me explain. The term “evil” is used here in a broad sense, and is not restricted to moral wrongdoings. It refers to everything we consider to be bad or harmful, such as animal suffering or human diseases. Types of evil may be classified in various ways, and the taxonomies overlap. For example, one might distinguish between (i) things in the world that are bad only if God exists, and (ii) things that are bad whether he exists or not. Divine hiddenness (Objection 2) is an instance of (i); I focus here on (ii).

One should also differentiate between (m) moral evils, that is, bad things brought about by free and intentional human actions or due to culpable negligence, including these actions and instances of negligence themselves, and (n) natural evils, such as the suffering caused by predators, parasites, or natural disasters. As said, I concentrate on natural evils. Finally, one should distinguish between (x) logical arguments from evil against theism, according to which there is a hidden contradiction between theism and the factual claim that there are specific evils in the world, and (y) evidential arguments, which are our topic here. Evidential arguments from evil aim at showing that both for many individual instances of evil_{1-n}, for particular kinds of evil, and for the sum of all these instances and kinds, $P(\text{evil} \mid \text{naturalism} \& k) > P(\text{evil} \mid \text{theism} \& k)$.

In a well-known article (1979), William Rowe described some instances of suffering that clearly are not indispensable means to higher goods. For example, “[i]n some distant forest lightning strikes a dead tree, resulting in a forest fire. In the fire a fawn is trapped, horribly burned, and lies in terrible agony for several days before death relieves its suffering” (Rowe (1979, p. 337)). Because the omnipotent god of theism could easily have prevented this suffering, whereas in all probability it neither is a means to some higher good nor needed to prevent a greater evil, such a fact constitutes empirical evidence against theism. Since there are innumerable instances of gratuitous evil, they amount to strong evidence against God’s existence.

Let me mention the occurrence of mass extinctions on Earth, during which biodiversity decreased rapidly. The omnipotent deity whom theists believe in could easily have prevented the Cretaceous–Paleogene extinction event, for example, because it was caused by an asteroid impact about 66 million years ago. God merely had to divert from earth the trajectory of this asteroid or comet. Theists might object that although this

excessively evil event caused immense suffering, and extinguished about three-quarters of all animal species on earth such as the non-avian dinosaurs, it was a precondition for the greater good of the evolution of humans and other mammals, so that it was not gratuitous or pointless. The obvious rejoinder is, of course, that a benevolent and omnipotent god would not have decided to create humans by this excessively cruel evolutionary detour.

A better counter-argument against the evidential objection from gratuitous natural evil stresses the abyss between our limited cognitive capacities and God's omniscience. Even if we humans cannot discover for which higher goods the many instances of evil on earth are necessary means, it does not follow that these evils are gratuitous. Surely, the omniscient god of theism would permit them only if they are unavoidable means to greater goods?

However, this reply by "skeptical theists" has two serious drawbacks. First, if we humans cannot fathom God's intentions, theism has no predictive power. It follows that we should make up our minds about the probability that theism is true merely on the basis of its low prior (cf. Evidential Objection 1). Second, one would expect that a perfectly good father-god would reveal his reasons for causing or permitting so much suffering on earth in order to console us, but God does not do so (cf. Evidential Objection 2). The story of the Fall is unconvincing as an exculpatory explanation for this divine silence. Since the various theodicy arguments of theists are either irrelevant or unconvincing with regard to natural evils, the occurrence of natural evil amounts to strong evidence against theism.

Closing Considerations

As I indicated, polytheistic religions preceded monotheist ones whenever the latter arose in a particular area. This fact of cultural history not only supports evidential objections 2 and 3. It also raises an explanatory paradox for theists today.

Because theists are atheists concerning all gods apart from God, they may endorse a purely secular explanation of polytheistic beliefs. With regard to their own monotheist convictions, however, theists cannot but reject such a secular account. They hold these beliefs to be true, and think that they are warranted somehow. What justifies this explanatory divergence? Can theists argue convincingly that their religious belief is more likely to be true than polytheistic convictions or competing monotheisms, in order to justify their atheism-with-one-exception? I think that the best attempts to do so fail (cf. Philipse 2012). Let me sketch a purely secular explanation of all religious beliefs in human cultures, including those of theism. Since this secular explanation of theistic beliefs will turn out to be superior to the religious explanation by theism itself, it constitutes additional evidence against theism.

In cultural history, monotheist creeds developed often via henotheistic intervals out of polytheistic religions. Consequently, religious scholars have to raise and answer two explanatory questions. First, how should we explain the origin and spread of polytheistic beliefs? Second, what accounts for the transition from polytheisms to monotheistic religions such as theism?

With regard to the first question, results of diverse scientific disciplines are of relevance. Psychological research reveals that children tend to interpret many natural phenomena as somehow intended or intentional. Since this inclination exists in very young children, it is plausible to suppose that it is an innate disposition, the genesis of which requires an evolutionary explanation. Let me mention, for example, the hypothesis that early humans evolved a “Hyperactive Agent Detection Device” (HADD), which enabled our evolutionary ancestors in the African jungle to escape from predators. Clearly, such a mental device was more fitness-enhancing if it was hypersensitive than if its sensitivity had been insufficient. Because a hypersensitive device evolved, it may have triggered the fantasy of non-existing predators such as evil gods. The origin of human beliefs in gods will have had other causes as well. Once invented, these god-ideas acquired diverse psychological and social functions, such as invigorating tribal cohesion by religious rituals.

In order to account for the cultural transition from polytheisms to theism, I propose an amended Humean hypothesis (Philipse 2016). Writing in 1757, David Hume explained the genesis of theism by supposing that in the course of time humans flattered their gods ever more, out of fear and distress. As a consequence, they attributed to their gods increasingly perfect properties. This went on until they arrived at the logical limit of infinity or omni-attributes such as omniscience, “beyond which there is no farther progress” (Hume 1976, p. 52)). Since there can be only one god who is omnipotent, this cultural process ultimately led to monotheism. My amendment to Hume consists in the assumption that the contest of flattering gods occurred primarily in situations of war. Typically, people assumed that the probability of winning a battle increased to the extent that their gods were more powerful than the gods of the enemy.

There are many confirmations of this hypothesis. For example, according to Deuteronomy 7: 1–2, God ordered the people of Israel to “utterly destroy” the seven nations that resided in promised land, “and show no mercy to them.” Since God was considered to be more powerful than the divinities of these nations, the Jewish tribe could vanquish them, although the enemies were much more numerous. Another confirmation consists in Constantine’s conversion to Christianity before the battle of the Pons Milvius in AD 312, during which he defeated the much larger army of Maxentius. Clearly, the Christian God is more powerful than Mars, whom Maxentius invoked, so that the conversion to Christianity may have convinced Constantine’s troops that they could win the battle. The resulting self-confidence will have contributed to their victory.

These and many similar facts concerning the rise of theism in human history are explained by my secular account. If theism were true, however, they would be mysterious anomalies. If he really existed, the infinitely good god of theism would never have ordered anyone to “utterly destroy” other people, or to inspire a war on his behalf, or to “elect” only one human tribe. For this reason, a secular account of all religions including theism is vastly superior to a theistic account of theism. This constitutes further evidence against the truth of theism.

References

- Hartmann, W. (2015) “Chelyabinsk, Zond IV, and a possible first-century fireball of historical importance.” *Meteoritics and Planetary Science* 50: 368–381.

- Hume, D. (1976) *The Natural History of Religion*, ed. W. Colver. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Original work published 1757.
- Maitzen, S. (2006) "Divine hiddenness and the demographics of theism." *Religious Studies* 42: 177–191.
- Paley, W. (1802) "Natural theology," *Collected Works*, Vol. IV. London: Rivington.
- Philipse, H. (2012) *God in the Age of Science: A Critique of Religious Reason*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Philipse, H. (2016) "Ethics and religion disconnected," in S. Herzberg and H. Watzka (eds.) *Transzendenzlos glücklich? Zur Entkoppelung von Ethik und Religion in der postchristlichen Gesellschaft*. Münster: Aschendorf Verlag, 153–166.
- Rowe, W. (1979) "The problem of evil and some varieties of atheism." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16: 335–341.
- Schellenberg, J. (2006) *Divine Hiddenness and Human Reason*, 2nd edn. Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Schellenberg, J. (2015a). *The Hiddenness Argument. Philosophy's New Challenge to Belief in God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schellenberg, J. (2015b) "Divine hiddenness and human philosophy," in A. Green and E. Stump (eds.) *Hidden Divinity and Religious Belief: New Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 13–32.
- Swinburne, R. (2004) *The Existence of God*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Swinburne, R. (2016) *The Coherence of Theism*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Further Reading

- Martin, M., and Monnier, R. (eds.) (2006) *The Improbability of God*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books – a good overview of evidential arguments against the existence of God.
- Sober, E. (2008) *Evidence and Evolution: The Logic behind the Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press – an excellent analysis of the concept of evidence and its application to intelligent design and evolutionary theory.
- Howson, C. (2011) *Objecting to God*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press – a provocative analysis of evidence that has recently been claimed to support theism, including the alleged fine-tuning of our universe for life.
- Everitt, N. (2004) *The Non-Existence of God*. London: Routledge – a comprehensive critical assessment of arguments *pro* and *contra* theism.
- Oppy, G. (2006) *Arguing about Gods*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press – a critical evaluation of arguments about orthodoxly conceived monotheistic gods.

Normative Objections to Theism

STEPHEN MAITZEN

Theism faces objections of various kinds, including the logical and evidential objections discussed elsewhere in this volume (Chapters 12 and 13). I intend to show that theism also faces important normative objections – in particular, moral objections – that arise mainly from theistic attempts to solve the problem of suffering.

Theism and the Problem of Suffering

I begin by defining “theism.” I shall define “the problem of suffering” later in this section.

As classically defined, theism asserts that there exists a person, God, whose essence includes perfection – that is, unsurpassable greatness – in knowledge, power, and goodness.¹ The classical definition sets the bar high in regard to the attributes that God must possess, but it seems to me that theism has no well-motivated alternative to doing so. As I’ll argue, if you believe in God at all, then it only makes sense to believe in a God who is essentially perfect. There’s insufficient motivation to believe in a God of any other kind.

Perhaps least importantly, without the assumption that God must be unsurpassably great, you sacrifice the only *a priori* basis for believing in God’s existence, namely the Ontological Argument in any of its various versions. Every version of the Ontological Argument relies on the assumption that any being deserving the title “God” must be as great as anything could possibly be. From this assumption, the most plausible form of the argument infers that any such being actually exists if it so much as possibly exists.² From the premise that such a being possibly exists, the argument then concludes that the being actually exists. Even the most plausible form of the argument certainly deserves to be challenged, but the argument doesn’t even get started without the assumption that God is unsurpassably great.

More importantly, to imagine an imperfect God is to invite results that are theologically awkward, if not disastrous. Unlike a perfect God, an imperfect God need not be eternal or everlasting: such a God might be only finitely old, might be perishable, and might go out of existence just when we need him most! If God is imperfect, why think that God has the power to make the universe out of nothing, or even the power to make the universe out of pre-existing stuff? If God is imperfect, why trust that God has the power to achieve justice in the end, to vindicate all wrongs, or even to compensate for all wrongs? The affirmation “with God, all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26, KJV)³ is supposed to comfort believers, but if God is imperfect, what assurance do they have that all things *are* possible with God? In addition, the more limited and imperfect one imagines God to be, the more one makes God resemble the deities that polytheistic religions invoke to explain various aspects of the natural world: one god for the sun, another for the moon, another for fertility, and so on. But surely deities of that sort have been made superfluous by science’s ability to explain those aspects of the universe in purely naturalistic terms.

Finally, it’s theologically perilous to suppose that God could fall short of moral perfection in particular. It seems clear that we tend to judge those who are morally deficient much more harshly than we judge those who are deficient merely in power or knowledge. Imagine three men none of whom saves a toddler from drowning in a lake: one only because he can’t swim, a second only because he’s too oblivious to notice the toddler’s noisy flailing, and a third only because he likes to watch toddlers drown. Only the third agent deserves to be regarded as truly despicable. Any God who could behave anything like the third agent is, again, not worth believing in or worshipping.

For the aforementioned reasons, the only well-motivated options seem to be these: an essentially perfect God exists, or no God at all exists. Therefore, I’ll assume that God, if God exists, must be perfect in at least knowledge, power, and goodness.⁴ The following question, then, looms large: Why does a God answering to that description ever allow suffering that he could prevent?⁵ The problem of suffering arises as a challenge to theism because of the allegation that humans and other animals experience unwanted, undeserved suffering (often also called “evil”) that a perfect God, if one exists, morally ought to have prevented and therefore would have prevented.

Descriptions of suffering allegedly of that type abound in the philosophical literature. In order to have a specific example before us, consider the case of Dominick Calhoun, a four-year-old boy from Michigan who died after days of being beaten and burned by his mother’s boyfriend. “I’ve been doing this a long time, and this is the worst case of child abuse I’ve ever seen,” said the local police chief about Dominick’s case; “in all respects, he was tortured.” Dominick’s body was found covered with bruises and with all of his teeth knocked out. His grandmother reported that “burns covered his body” and that his brain was “bashed out of his skull.” A neighbor told police he heard Dominick screaming, over and over again, “Mommy, make him stop.”⁶ The allegation is that God, being perfect, would have prevented Dominick’s torture. So why did God allow it to occur? To answer that question is to give a *theodicy*. I’ll raise moral objections to three major theodicies: the free-will theodicy, the soul-making theodicy, and theodical individualism.

The Free-Will Theodicy

The most popular of all theodicies tries to justify God's permission of unwanted, undeserved suffering such as Dominick's on the grounds that God must never interfere with the free will of a human agent, not even to stop the agent from torturing a child, or at least that God's desire to respect the torturer's free will can justify God in allowing the torture. The obvious objection, however, is that God's allowing a child's torture *in order* not to interfere with the torturer's free will would be a clear case of exploiting the child for some other end, something no perfect being could do. Indeed, it's worse than imperfect; it's depraved.

If anything, this popular theistic refrain about the sacrosanct value of human free will shows just how alien theism is to our ordinary moral outlook.⁷ If you decide to play the role of spectator while a child is tortured, even though you could stop the torture at no cost or risk to yourself, the last thing ordinary morality will do is excuse your inaction on the grounds that you wanted to avoid restricting the torturer's freedom.⁸ It's hard to see why theists imagine that the very same excuse could exonerate a perfect God. According to ordinary morality, a bystander can indeed be obligated to intervene on behalf of a child who's being tortured, even if intervening means restricting the torturer's free will – especially, I would add, if the bystander is God, for whom alone intervention always comes at no personal cost or risk.⁹

One might object that if God restricts the free will of even a single child-torturer, then God has no principled reason to refrain from restricting free will *whenever* someone makes a choice likely to cause any amount of unwanted, undeserved suffering, and restricting free will on every such occasion would leave humans with only highly circumscribed freedom. But this familiar objection can be answered in two ways. According to the first answer, there exists a non-zero limit to the unwanted, undeserved suffering that a perfect God can allow *for the sake* of unfettered human free will, and therefore God can allow humans to exercise their free will up to but not beyond that limit. One recent author sympathetic to the free-will theodicy seems to concede as much:

First, and most obviously, God might permit an instance of suffering for the purpose of respecting the free action of one of his creatures Of course, respecting the freedom of creatures might not justify God's permission of just any evil (if the harm suffered by [Smith's victim] is bad enough, it would seem better for God to constrain Smith's free will than for Smith to have the ability to inflict that sort of harm on another). (Anderson 2012, p. 35)

If, as Anderson suggests, such a limit does exist, then even if we humans can't know precisely where it falls, the burden of proof rests with anyone who denies that Dominick's protracted, lethal torture went clearly beyond the limit.¹⁰

According to the second answer, there's *no* amount of unwanted, undeserved suffering that a perfect God can allow for the sake of unfettered human free will. Three arguments support this answer. First, on the *compatibilist* view of free will – which, it's worth noting, far more contemporary philosophers accept than reject¹¹ – we can choose freely even if natural laws determine that we never freely choose actions that cause unwanted, undeserved suffering. According to compatibilism, I can freely make

beneficial or innocuous choices even if the laws of nature determine that I'll always make such choices rather than harmful ones: what matters to the freedom of my beneficial or innocuous choices is their *actual* causal history – including my actual character and my prior deliberations – not the causal possibility of other histories in which I make harmful choices instead. On this view, God can institute laws of nature that determine that our choices are beneficial or innocuous without thereby making our choices unfree; therefore, God need not permit harmful actions in order to leave us with unfettered free will. Much less need God permit the Fall of all creation and the consequent entry of suffering into the world, as some major religions teach, in order to leave our free will unfettered.

Second, if God allows unwanted, undeserved suffering for the sake of unfettered human free will, then such suffering must be an *unavoidable* by-product of unfettered human free will; otherwise, God could simply allow the free will but prevent the suffering. If so, however, then a problem for the free-will theodicy arises from the theistic doctrine of heaven, or paradise, which says that our ideal state of existence contains no unwanted, undeserved suffering – indeed, no suffering of any kind. But if unwanted, undeserved suffering is an unavoidable by-product of unfettered human free will, then we must *lack* unfettered free will in that ideal state of existence. In that case, it's hard to see how unfettered human free will is at all *valuable*, let alone valuable enough to justify God's permission of suffering. The defender of the free-will theodicy therefore seems forced to declare that the theistic doctrine of heaven is internally inconsistent and hence not even possibly true.

Third, as both compatibilists and their libertarian opponents agree, free will is important because it enables us to make choices for which we're *morally responsible*. Those choices include the choice whether or not, as bystanders, to intervene to prevent unwanted, undeserved suffering when we encounter it. But here another problem arises. Theism implies that God, being perfectly knowing, plays at least the role of bystander to every event in the universe, including every case of unwanted, undeserved suffering. Theism also implies that God, being perfectly powerful, is far abler than any human bystander to prevent any case of unwanted, undeserved suffering and, unlike any human bystander, can always prevent it at no personal cost or risk. It follows that if either bystander, human or divine, is morally responsible for preventing the suffering, it's the divine bystander. In that case, it's hard to see how the human bystander could be morally responsible for preventing it, because in every case in which anyone is responsible the divine bystander is *already* responsible and vastly more capable of fulfilling that responsibility.

Theism, therefore, relieves any human bystander of moral responsibility for intervening to prevent unwanted, undeserved suffering, a result for which I'll give another argument in Section 4. So the free-will theodicy fails if it says that we humans possess free will at least partly in order to allow us to choose whether or not to fulfil that responsibility. This result also refutes the familiar apologetic proposal according to which "God ... withholds His intervention in order to give us the opportunity to do the right thing" (Hasker 2010, pp. 307–308), if doing "the right thing" means fulfilling our own responsibility to intervene. Furthermore, and independently of the foregoing argument, it's morally outrageous to propose that a perfect God could stand by and let a child to be tortured *in order to* give some fallible human bystander the chance to intervene.

Such conduct is the reprehensible exploitation of children. It bears noting, of course, that no one ended up rescuing Dominick, nor does anyone rescue any of the other children whom God, if God exists, allows to be tortured to death.

The Soul-Making Theodicy

According to the soul-making theodicy (Hick 1966), God permits suffering such as Dominick's in order to allow humans in general to develop such virtues as compassion, forbearance, and courage in response to that suffering. Toby Betenson (2016, p. 61) notes two important moral objections to this theodicy: (i) the more thoroughly we embrace the theodicy, the less likely we are to acquire the moral virtues our acquisition of which is supposed to be God's purpose in allowing suffering; (ii) the theodicy treats persons merely as means rather than as ends in themselves.

First, Betenson argues, the more we understand another person's suffering in the way that the soul-making theodicy understands it, *as a God-intended opportunity for us to respond virtuously*, the harder it is for us to respond *virtuously* to that other person's suffering. In order for us to respond virtuously to another person's suffering, we must respond to the suffering principally (if not exclusively) out of concern for that other person, rather than out of a concern that we not pass up the chance to exhibit our virtue. As D. Z. Phillips puts it, on the soul-making theodicy "the sufferings of others are treated as an opportunity for me to be shown at my best. Ironically, if I think of their sufferings in this way, I am shown at my worst" (quoted in Betenson 2016, p. 61).

Second, the soul-making theodicy portrays God as immorally exploiting sufferers, among them children, because it portrays God as allowing their suffering as a means to *other* people's moral development. According to Betenson, this ethical defect of the theodicy explains why its philosophical popularity has declined in recent decades:

It used to be supposed that the suffering of some might be redeemable by the benefits it afforded to others; for example, an earthquake in some distant part of the world affords us the opportunity to develop the virtue of charity, etc. This is now an unpopular position. As Eleonore Stump puts it, "There is something morally repulsive about supposing that the point of allowing a child to suffer is some abstract benefit for the race as a whole." She concludes that "the good which justifies a child's pain must be a benefit *for that child*." (Betenson 2016, p. 61)

However, this highly plausible "patient-centered" requirement – that only the sufferer's own benefit could justify a perfect God's permission of unwanted, undeserved suffering – generates another problem for theism, as I'll explain in Section 4.

The soul-making theodicy faces a third objection, one that I haven't seen any other commentator raise: it fails because it begs the question.¹² Soul-making is supposed to be positive when it instills or strengthens such qualities as compassion, forbearance, and courage, rather than their opposites. But compassion, forbearance, and courage have positive value – they're virtues – only because of the existence or threat of suffering that God, if he exists, has himself *chosen to allow*. In a world without the threat of suffering (as theists routinely imagine heaven to be), compassion, forbearance, and courage are

no more valuable than physical strength is in a world without the threat of something heavy.¹³ The value of those virtues *given* a dangerous world like ours can't, therefore, explain why God allows our world to be dangerous in the first place.

The same objection refutes a related theodicy proposed by William Hasker. According to Hasker, God allows intense suffering at least partly in order to imbue our world with moral seriousness: if God intervened to prevent all behavior that was "significantly harmful," writes Hasker, then "morality, assuming it existed at all, would lack much of the significance we ordinarily assume it to have" (1992, p. 29). This theodicy also begs the question, because the moral obligation to prevent significant harm is a *consequence* of the threat of significant harm, and no perfect God is forced to allow the threat of significant harm in the first place: the theistic notion of heaven, whose inhabitants experience joy but never the threat of significant harm, is at least logically coherent. Yes, without the threat of significant harm we wouldn't have significant morality, but the point is we wouldn't *need* it. Moral seriousness isn't an intrinsically good feature of a world but only a consequence of the kinds of danger that God allows *our* world to contain. The moral obligation to prevent significant harm isn't an end that's valuable for its own sake, much less an end valuable enough for its own sake to justify God's permission of suffering.

Theodical Individualism

Nevertheless, Hasker's theodicy does point to an important conflict between theism and ordinary morality. The conflict arises from the requirement that only the sufferer's *own* benefit could justify a perfect God's permission of unwanted, undeserved suffering. This requirement, now sometimes called "theodical individualism" (following Jordan 2004, p. 169), has been recently defended by Maitzen (2009; 2011; 2013). It has been criticized by Mawson (2011), but Mawson's criticism (2011, p. 154) relies entirely on the free-will theodicy that Section 2, above, showed to be gravely defective.

The aforementioned conflict arises this way. On one hand, ordinary morality says that if you can easily, and at no cost or risk to yourself, prevent the torture of a child such as Dominick, then you ought to prevent it. In particular, as I emphasized in Section 2, you don't come close to evading that moral obligation by pleading your desire to respect the torturer's free will. On the other hand, if theism and theodical individualism are true, then God permits unwanted, undeserved suffering only when that suffering is necessary (or else optimal) for the sufferer's own benefit. Eleonore Stump made this point decades ago: "if a good God allows evil," and by "evil" Stump means unwanted, undeserved suffering, "it can only be because the evil in question produces a net benefit for the sufferer and one that God could not produce without the suffering" (Stump 1985, pp. 411–412).

Stump's use of the verb "produces" is important, because without it we allow that God's *post hoc* compensation of the sufferer – in a blissful afterlife, perhaps – can justify God's permission of suffering even if the suffering is neither necessary for, nor the best way of, achieving the benefit that compensates for it. But in such a case the benefit serves as *mere* compensation rather as a justification; what justifies God's permission must, instead, be something necessary or optimal for *producing* the sufferer's net benefit.¹⁴

What, if anything, justifies parents in allowing their young child to be jabbed with painful needles by someone in a white coat? Not the lollipop that the child receives afterward for putting up with the vaccination; that's mere compensation. Rather, the justification consists in the child's acquiring immunity to a serious disease, which is a net benefit for the child (even factoring in the pain of the vaccination) and one that, given the state of medical science, can't be conferred on the child in any better way.

Therefore, if theism and theodical individualism are true, then unwanted, undeserved suffering is closely analogous to the pain that a child experiences during a vaccination – that is, an unavoidable feature of the only (or best) way to secure an essential benefit for the sufferer. Notice that we regard ourselves as under no moral obligation to prevent childhood vaccinations just because they hurt. On the contrary, preventing vaccinations for that reason would be a case of seriously misguided compassion.¹⁵ By the same token, then, theism and theodical individualism together relieve us of the moral obligation we thought we had to prevent unwanted, undeserved suffering, even if the suffering is horrendous and we can prevent it at no cost or risk to ourselves. If God exists, then Dominick's torture must have been necessary or optimal for his securing some net benefit, in which case we'd have been no more obligated to prevent his torture than to prevent his vaccination against measles.

Rob Lovering (2011) raises two objections to the foregoing argument. Unlike Mawson, he doesn't dispute theodical individualism, much less on the basis of the dubious free-will theodicy. Lovering's first objection is that we can be morally obligated to prevent Dominick's torture, especially if we can do so at no cost or risk to ourselves, *even if* the torture is necessary or optimal for Dominick's securing a net benefit. We can be obligated, according to Lovering, because the torture is *seriously immoral*. "All else being equal," he writes, "if an act A is seriously immoral, then one has a moral obligation to prevent A," a claim that he calls the Preventing Immorality Principle (2011, p. 85). Now, given how many seriously immoral acts are occurring on earth at this very moment, one might question whether such a strong principle is true on any reasonable interpretation of "all else being equal." Honoring the principle might keep me very busy indeed. Nevertheless, I'll accept it for the sake of argument. As Lovering (2011, p. 94) recognizes, the principle applies to a case like Dominick's only if the kind of treatment Dominick suffered is indeed seriously immoral. Lovering claims that it is, on the grounds that "ordinary morality is, in certain respects, deontological in nature":

[Because] ordinary morality forbids various types of acts even if the best consequences *overall* could be achieved only by performing such an act, ... surely it also forbids various types of acts even if the best consequences *solely for the individual on the receiving end of such acts* could be achieved only by performing such an act. (p. 95, emphases in original)

While Lovering is right that ordinary morality contains deontological commitments, his inference is invalid. Ordinary morality would regard it as seriously immoral to stab a young child's abdomen 21 times with a long, painful needle for the sole purpose of sparing the rest of humanity the inconvenience of a mild headache, even if the aggregate pain of those billions of mild headaches would exceed the child's own pain. Doing so would violate a deontological rule against exploitation. But ordinary morality would not regard that treatment as seriously immoral if done in order to spare the child herself

from rabies, the treatment that used to be medically required if a child was bitten by a rabid animal (Cosgrove 2013). In the latter case, the treatment was morally permissible precisely *because* the net benefit accrued to the child rather than merely to others. Lovering's first objection therefore fails.

His second objection is that we humans can have an all-things-considered moral obligation to prevent (in the particular example he discusses) the immolation of a small boy even if God, who knows that the immolation is necessary for the boy's own benefit, has no such obligation himself. But Lovering's objection depends on his Preventing Immorality Principle, which, again, applies to the immolation only if the immolation is seriously immoral. He claims that it *is* seriously immoral, but his only argument for that claim is the same invalid inference I just identified, namely, "the boy's immolation would be seriously immoral even if the immolation were [needed] to produce a net benefit for the boy (given, at any rate, *my* understanding of ordinary morality, as stated above)" (Lovering 2011, p. 97, emphasis in original). Because his understanding of ordinary morality is mistaken in the way I indicated, Lovering's second objection fails as well.

Ryan Byerly (2018) also criticizes the argument that theism and ordinary morality conflict. He suggests that one can evade the argument if one rejects the following claim about God's power: "[I]t is by virtue of God's omnipotence that for any evils whatsoever, God can guarantee that those evils are required for promoting outweighing goods for those who suffer them" (pp. 9–10). Byerly regards the claim as doubtful because it "assigns to God control over modal facts – specifically, facts about what is *required* for what ... "and" ... [t]he relationship between God and modal facts is ... hotly debated" (2018, n18, emphasis in original). But rejecting the claim does nothing to challenge the original argument. Let it be granted that God lacks the control over modal facts that he would need in order to make some potential instance of suffering, S, required for producing a net benefit for the sufferer. In that case, theodical individualism demands that God *prevent* S instead, something that God clearly has the power to do. Even if God can't make it the case that S is required for producing a net benefit for the sufferer, God can surely *see* that it isn't required in time to prevent it. The original argument thus escapes Byerly's criticism.

A final objection to the argument takes issue with the precise wording of the principle of theodical individualism. Recall Stump's formulation of the principle, quoted earlier: "if a good God allows evil [i.e., unwanted, undeserved suffering], it can only be because the evil in question produces a net benefit for the sufferer and one that God could not produce without the suffering" (1985, pp. 411–412). Some critics insist that God's goodness implies, not that (i) the evil in question must produce a net benefit for the sufferer, but only that (ii) *God's permission* of the evil in question must produce a net benefit for the sufferer (Howard-Snyder 2014, p. 295n3).¹⁶ But notice that if God's goodness implies (ii) but not (i), then (iii) conceivably God can be morally blameless for allowing the evil whereas some human bystander has a moral obligation to prevent it. As we established in Section 2, God is a bystander to every case of unwanted, undeserved suffering and is always better equipped to prevent the suffering than any human bystander, a combination that falsifies (iii) and thereby falsifies the critics' claim that (ii) doesn't imply (i). The objection therefore fails.

In my judgment, then, the argument from theodical individualism to the incompatibility of theism and ordinary morality is cogent. But even if it isn't – even if theism

leaves logical room for our moral duty to prevent at least some cases of unwanted, undeserved suffering – a similar conflict nonetheless emerges. If a perfect God exists, then the worse a person's unwanted, undeserved suffering, the *more likely* it is that the suffering is necessary or optimal for producing a net benefit for the sufferer. Suppose that a child suffers a brief headache that's both unwanted and undeserved, rather than (say) the result of ignoring a parent's warning not to eat ice cream so fast. Even if God wasn't morally obligated to prevent that brief headache unless it produced a net benefit for the child, it's less plausible to say the same thing about Dominick's horrific suffering. However likely it may be that the child's headache was unconnected to the child's net benefit – being, instead, something we might shrug off as “just the way the world works” – it's less likely, given theism, that Dominick's torture fits that description: the torture demands justification to a greater degree than the headache does.

So, given theism, the torture is more likely than the headache to have been necessary or optimal for producing the sufferer's own net benefit, in which case we humans have more reason to prevent the headache than to prevent the torture. In general, we should prevent mild suffering first, extreme suffering later, quite contrary to our ordinary moral attitude. In a phrase, theism encourages *reverse triage*. This result shows that theism and ordinary moral conflict in this way even if they should turn out to be otherwise compatible.

Theism and the “Defeat of Evil”

Section 3 argued that Hasker's theodicy, which invokes the moral seriousness of our world, can't justify God's choice to permit, in the first place, the danger that *makes* our world morally serious and which, according to the doctrine of heaven, we don't face in our ideal state of existence anyway. Section 4 argued, in effect, that theism *precludes* the moral seriousness of our world by dissolving our basic moral obligation to prevent unwanted, undeserved suffering such as Dominick's torture if we easily can. If we never have that fundamental moral obligation, then I can't see how we could have the less fundamental obligations to refrain from theft, fraud, bigotry, or slander. If we lack a moral obligation to prevent even the worst suffering by children, then morality becomes, at best, frivolous because it no longer concerns the most serious kinds of harm. The arguments of those two sections are mutually consistent, even if they may seem incompatible. One can accept both arguments by holding, as I think one should, that our world is morally serious – hence theism is false – not because moral seriousness is intrinsically good but because of the kind of danger that our world happens to contain.

I'll conclude by discussing one final normative objection to theism. It concerns a view that it seems many theists hold about the so-called “defeat of evil.” Roderick Chisholm (1968) defines the concept in roughly this way: an evil state of affairs, E, is defeated when some good state of affairs, G, requires E, and the combination of E and G is intrinsically better than the absence of both E and G would have been. According to Chisholm, “the theodicy ... can deal with the problem of evil *only* by saying that the evils in the world are defeated in the sense that I have tried to describe” (Chisholm 1968, p. 37, emphasis in original). If so, then theodicy is a morally hazardous occupation.

Alexander Pruss, a Christian philosopher at Baylor University, offers a particularly stunning example of the alleged defeat of evil: a state of affairs containing both (E*) the severe beating, rape, and strangulation to death of a five-year-old girl and (F) the girl's *post mortem* forgiveness of the perpetrator is "obviously better," he claims, than a state of affairs in which neither E* nor F occurs.¹⁷

I find such a view impossible to accept. First, it seems to misclassify forgiveness as an intrinsically good feature of a world – something valuable for its own sake alone – rather than as a virtuous response merely *in* a world that contains wrongdoing.¹⁸ Perhaps the sheer abundance of wrongdoing throughout our history has conditioned us to "make a virtue of necessity," to mistake forgiveness for an end in itself rather than to recognize it as merely necessitated by our contingent circumstances. In this sense, then, the view betrays a failure of imagination, an inability or refusal to acknowledge the possibilities for world-making that would be open to a perfect God. Second, the view seems to take the phrase "the defeat of evil" with childish literalness, as if evil were a cunning supervillain to be vanquished in a video game that would be much less thrilling without the fight. Third, and worst of all, it seems to shift the burden to the victim of wrongdoing: having been brutally raped, the victim can now defeat the evil by forgiving the rapist and thereby do her part to make the world "better" than it would have been had she never been raped in the first place.

Acknowledgments

I thank Indiana University Press for kind permission to reproduce parts of Maitzen (2017).

Notes

- 1 For a mainstream characterization of theism in these terms, see Plantinga (1983), p. 20.
- 2 The classic discussion is Plantinga (1974, Chapter 10). Plantinga's version of the argument requires the controversial modal principle "If possibly necessarily *p*, then *p*."
- 3 For similar biblical affirmations, see also Job 42:2, Jeremiah 32:17, and Luke 1:37, all cited in Leftow (2011), p. 106.
- 4 If you think that the "openness" of the future makes it impossible for any being to foreknow every truth about the future, then you should hold that perfect knowledge doesn't require foreknowing every truth about the future, the latter knowledge being impossible. However, the impossibility of such foreknowledge doesn't imply the impossibility of having *extremely well-justified beliefs* about the future, beliefs so well-justified that it would be immoral not to act on them merely because they don't count as knowledge. William Hasker, himself a defender of the openness of the future, emphasizes this point (Hasker 2010, p. 38). The point becomes crucial when we consider how God ought to respond, for example, if God believes that an innocent child is about to be tortured.
- 5 For economy in what follows, I'll refer explicitly to preventing suffering, rather than relieving it, but nothing of substance turns on this choice, because to relieve suffering is simply to prevent more, or worse, suffering.
- 6 As reported at <http://www.cnn.com/2010/CRIME/04/15/michigan.child.torture> (accessed 13 September 2018), and http://www.mlive.com/news/flint/index.ssf/2010/04/dominick_calhoun_argentine_tow.html

- 7 I won't try to define "our ordinary moral outlook," because I don't think it has a non-trivial definition. Even so, we can identify some uncontroversial commitments of that outlook, among them the claim that we're at least sometimes morally obligated to prevent easily preventable, horrific suffering by a child.
- 8 As Derk Pereboom notes, from the ordinary moral perspective "the evildoer's freedom is a weightless consideration, not merely an outweighed consideration" (2005, p. 84, citing and expanding on Lewis 1993, p. 155).
- 9 For further criticisms of the free-will theodicy, see Maitzen (2009), pp. 120–122, and Maitzen (2014), pp. 278–279.
- 10 We needn't know precisely where the limit falls in order to know that something goes well beyond it. If a precise cutoff exists between bald men and men who aren't bald, we don't know where it falls. Nevertheless, Telly Savalas in *Kojak* clearly was bald and Jimi Hendrix at Monterey clearly wasn't.
- 11 At least according to the survey data reported by Bourget and Chalmers (2014), p. 492.
- 12 I make the same point in Maitzen (2017), p. 150.
- 13 Contrary to Roderick Chisholm, who suggests that "the exercise of courage ... is a virtuous activity that is intrinsically good" (1968, p. 29). Even if courage is better than cowardice, at least in some circumstances and maybe in all circumstances, that doesn't imply that a world containing instances of courage is better, all else equal, than a world containing no real or perceived danger and hence neither instances of courage nor instances of cowardice.
- 14 For more on the crucial difference between justification and mere compensation, see Maitzen (2009), p. 110; (2010), pp. 194–196.
- 15 Not even "anti-vaxxers" oppose vaccinations because needles hurt but because, they allege, the ingredients in the vaccines themselves cause harm.
- 16 For a related objection, see Anderson (2012), pp. 31–33.
- 17 Alexander Pruss, online comment, 29 December 2011. Pruss's comment concerns an actual case that occurred in Flint, Michigan, as reported in the *Detroit Free Press*, 3 January 1986.
- 18 Moreover, it's unclear that forgiveness is always a virtuous response to wrongdoing. Perhaps some things ought not to be forgiven, as the bible seems to teach (Matthew 12:31; Mark 3:29).

References

- Anderson, D. (2012) "Sceptical theism and value judgments." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 72: 27–39.
- Betenson, T. (2016) "Anti-theodicy." *Philosophy Compass* 11: 56–65.
- Bourget, D., and Chalmers, D. (2014) "What do philosophers believe?" *Philosophical Studies* 170: 465–500.
- Byerly, T. (2018) "Ordinary morality does not imply atheism," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 83: 85–96. doi:10.1007/s11153-016-9589-7
- Chisholm, R. (1968) "The defeat of good and evil." *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 42: 21–38.
- Cosgrove, J. (2013) "What's it like: To get a rabies shot." Available at <http://newsok.com/article/3862071> (accessed 13 September 2018)
- Hasker, W. (1992) "The necessity of gratuitous evil." *Faith and Philosophy* 9: 23–44.
- Hasker, W. (2010) "Defining 'Gratuitous Evil' : A response to Alan R. Rhoda." *Religious Studies* 46: 303–309.

- Hick, J. (1966) *Evil and the God of Love*. London: Macmillan.
- Howard-Snyder, D. (2014) "Agnosticism, the moral scepticism objection, and commonsense morality," in T. Dougherty and J. McBrayer (eds.) *Sceptical Theism: New Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 293–306.
- Jordan, J. (2004) "Divine love and human suffering," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 56: 169–178.
- Leftow, B. (2011) "Why perfect being theology?" *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 69: 103–118.
- Lewis, D. (1993) "Evil for freedom's sake?" *Philosophical Papers* 22: 149–172.
- Lovering, R. (2011) "Does ordinary morality imply atheism? A reply to Maitzen." *Forum Philosophicum* 16: 83–98.
- Maitzen, S. (2009) "Ordinary morality implies atheism." *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 1: 107–126.
- Maitzen, S. (2010) "On Gellman's attempted rescue." *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 2, pp. 193–198.
- Maitzen, S. (2011) "Does God destroy our duty of compassion?" *Free Inquiry* 30(6): 35–37.
- Maitzen, S. (2013) "Atheism and the basis of morality," in A. Musschenga and A. van Harskamp (eds.) *What Makes Us Moral?* Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 257–269.
- Maitzen, S. (2014) "Agnosticism, sceptical theism, and moral obligation," in T. Dougherty and J. McBrayer (eds.) *Sceptical Theism: New Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 277–292.
- Maitzen, S. (2017) "Perfection, evil, and morality," in J. Sterba (ed.) *Ethics and the Problem of Evil*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 141–153.
- Mawson, T. (2011) "Theodical individualism." *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 3: 139–159.
- Pereboom, D. (2005) "Free will, evil, and divine providence," in A. Dole and A. Chignell (eds.) *God and the Ethics of Belief*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 77–98.
- Plantinga, A. (1974) *The Nature of Necessity*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Plantinga, A. (1983) "Reason and belief in God," in A. Plantinga and N. Wolterstorff (eds.) *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, pp. 16–93.
- Stump, E. (1985) "The problem of evil." *Faith and Philosophy* 2: 392–423.

Further Reading

Some suggested further reading:

- Hubin, D. C. (2009) "Empty and ultimately meaningless gestures?" in R. Garcia and N. King (eds.) *Is Goodness without God Good Enough? A Debate on Faith, Secularism, and Ethics*. New York: Roman & Littlefield, pp. 131–150. A challenge to the notion that only if God exists can we make sense of moral value, obligation, and supererogation.
- Morrison, W. (2012) "God and the ontological foundation of morality." *Religious Studies* 48: 15–34. A persuasive argument that morality doesn't require a theistic foundation.
- Sinnott-Armstrong, W. (2009) *Morality Without God?* New York: Oxford University Press. A defense of ethics on a non-theistic foundation, aimed at a general readership.
- Wielenberg, E. (2005) *Value and Virtue in a Godless Universe*. New York: Cambridge University Press. A defence of the objectivity of morality, the possibility of virtue, and the meaningfulness of life in a universe containing nothing supernatural.

Prudential Objections to Theism

GUY KAHANE

Take theism to be the claim that there exists a supernatural being who is supremely benevolent, omnipotent, and omniscient, and who is the creator of the universe. This chapter will be concerned with criticisms of theism that revolve around prudential considerations – considerations relating to the well-being of persons, and thus to what is in their self-interest.

In one ambitious form, such prudential arguments could try to use considerations relating to well-being as evidence that God doesn't exist. Since I find the prospects of such arguments dim, and since few defend them, I will not spend much time discussing them. I will give more space to a different kind of prudential argument: arguments that use prudential considerations as pragmatic reasons to not *believe* that God exists. I will also consider how prudential considerations may figure in debunking arguments against the belief that God does exist – the idea being that a belief can lose its justification if one has it only because one wants it to be true, or more generally because the belief is shaped by influences that are not truth-tracking. I will then turn to the question of whether we *should* want God to exist. In answering this question, I will consider a further kind of prudential argument – an argument that moves from claims about what would follow from God's existence, or non-existence, to prudential *conclusions*. In particular, I will consider arguments purporting to show that God's existence would make our lives worse, compared to an atheist alternative. While I do not think that such arguments give us any reason for thinking that God doesn't exist, or even for not believing that He exists, they bear on our attitude to the question of God's existence – on whether, for example, agnostics should hope that God exists or whether atheists should regret, or feel relief, that He doesn't.

Would it be Better or Worse for us to Believe in God?

The debate between theists, agnostics and atheists centers on the question:

(1) Does God exist?

This is an ontological question, a question about the world. There is also a related doxastic question about ourselves:

(2) Should we believe that God exists?

Our answer to (1) obviously bears on our answer to (2). The reasons and arguments that support answering (1) with a “No” also support answering (2) with a “No.” These would be considerations that bear on the likelihood that the proposition that God exists is true and, in this way, on the epistemic justification of believing that proposition to be true.

However, such epistemic reasons may not exhaust all of the considerations that bear on our answer to (2). There may also be *pragmatic* reasons – reasons that are grounded, not in the likely truth of a proposition, but in the benefits or harms that would follow from believing in it. On some views, we can have direct pragmatic reasons to believe in something. But even if we do not have such direct reasons, we might still have pragmatic reasons to *cause* ourselves to believe something.

Pragmatic reasons typically draw their force from claims about value. We would have pragmatic reasons to believe that God exists, or at least to get ourselves to believe that God exists, if

(3) Believing that God exists has good consequences.¹

Since not believing that God exists (or even believing He doesn’t) might have even better consequences, for our all-things-considered pragmatic reasons to support believing that God exists, we would need the stronger claim that

(4) Believing that God exists has better overall consequences than not believing that God exists.²

Things can be good or better (or bad or worse) in different ways. Many have held that belief in God has positive moral consequences – many used to predict, for example, that without fear of divine punishment all hell would break loose, and some still hold that that the decline of religion in the modern world *has* led to a lamentable decline in morality.

These questions about moral value will not concern us here. We are concerned with *prudential* value: with what is good or bad for a given individual person – with what makes their life go better or worse *for them*, with what benefits or harms them.³ I will therefore understand claims like (3) and (4) as claims about prudential value: claims that give pragmatic support for believing in God because such a belief would be good *for* the believer.

One kind of prudential objection to theism (in the sense of theist belief) would appeal to parallel claims in the reverse direction. It might be held, to begin with, that

(5) Believing that God exists has bad consequences.

That, however, is neither necessary nor sufficient for a pragmatic case against theist belief. It's not sufficient since not having such a belief might lead to even worse consequences. And it's not necessary since, as noted above, even if belief in God has positive effects, lack of such belief might have even better ones. So a prudential argument against theist belief had better focus on the claim that

(6) Believing that God exists would have worse overall consequences than not believing that God exists.

One common way of assessing evaluative claims such as (3)–(6) simply brackets the metaphysical question of God's existence. Setting this question aside, would it be better or worse for us if we believed in God?

Understood in this way, both theists and atheists could in principle agree on their answer to this question. Once we settle on an account of well-being, this is largely an empirical question. For example, if you think that subjective contentment is a major component (or even the whole) of well-being, then you will want to find out whether religious believers are happier, in this sense, than atheists and agnostics. This is a complicated empirical issue. Some surveys suggest that the religious are happier,⁴ yet the populations of the countries that consistently rank as happiest are also some of the least religious.⁵

But I don't find this question especially interesting. To begin with, it's rather hard to disentangle the causal contribution of theist belief itself from the effects of the further religious beliefs and practices that surround it, not to mention those of factors that might be associated with religion but are extrinsic to it (e.g., tighter social networks).⁶ To complicate things further, the psychological effects of a given belief would vary depending on the broader surrounding. So our answers to such empirical questions might be highly contextual – what makes for a happier life in Oslo needn't make for a happier life in Mumbai. There is unlikely to be some utterly general tie between theist belief and greater, or lesser, happiness.⁷

Similar worries apply to parallel general claims about the relation – whether positive or negative – between theist belief and other possible components of well-being – the satisfaction of our desires, achievement, deep personal relationships, moral virtue, and so forth. In any event, these are questions for social science, not for philosophy. And even if we could agree on conclusive answers to them, they would be of limited significance considered on their own. Even if atheists are a bit happier here on earth, this would hardly be a powerful prudential reason to believe in atheism if God does exist and atheists will spend the rest of their existence in eternal torment.

The Value of Theist Belief in Light of its Truth or Falsity

So to fully assess prudential claims about theist belief, we can't simply ignore the traditional metaphysical question about God's existence. Whether belief in God is overall good for us may depend in important ways on whether or not God does exist.

So even when we approach (2) in pragmatic terms, we can't simply ignore the meta-physical issues: we are asking whether (4) (or (6)) would be true *in light* of the correct answer to (1).

However, as Pascal famously pointed out, this doesn't mean we need to have a confident answer to (1) in hand. Pascal argued that should make a wager: if belief in God coupled with God's existence means we have a serious shot of eternal heavenly bliss while disbelief might land us in hell, then belief in God seems the prudent choice (see Pascal 2008; Jordan 2006).

Now this is a familiar prudential argument *for* theism; but there are also considerations that point in the other direction.

Notice first that Pascal's wager requires significant assumptions about what is likely to follow prudentially from God's existence. The mere idea of God doesn't simply entail the existence of heaven (let alone of hell), even less so that theist belief would be especially rewarded. In fact, the assumption that theist belief would be rewarded in this way by a supremely benevolent being is far from obvious. Bertrand Russell (1999) wrote in 1953 that "if there were a God, I think it very unlikely that He would have such an uneasy vanity as to be offended by those who doubt his existence" (p.45) and, developing this idea, Dawkins asks: "[W]hy ... do we so readily accept the idea that the one thing you must do if you want to please God is *believe* in him? What's so special about believing? Isn't it just as likely that God would reward kindness, or generosity, or humility? Or sincerity?" (2006, p.104)⁹ On such a view, being a morally good person is all that's required for admission to heaven. If so, then belief in God isn't needed for us to enjoy the benefits that would flow from God's existence (or rather: from His benevolence, if He exists) – not unless we make the dubious assumption that one needs to believe in God to be a morally good person.

Some would go even further. There is first the familiar worry that believing in God for pragmatic – indeed, for profoundly self-centered – reasons isn't likely to be rewarded; indeed it might even be punished. We could defend an even stronger claim. Thomas Jefferson wrote that we should "[q]uestion with boldness even the existence of a god; because, if there be one, he must more approve the homage of reason, than that of blindfolded fear,"¹⁰ and Hume's Philo similarly suggests that "the only persons entitled to [God's] compassion and indulgence would be the philosophical sceptics" (2007, p. 89). Galen Strawson (2012) puts this idea more bluntly:

It is an insult to God to believe in God. For on the one hand it is to suppose that he has perpetrated acts of incalculable cruelty. On the other hand, it is to suppose that he has perversely given his human creatures an instrument – their intellect – which must inevitably lead them, if they are dispassionate and honest, to deny his existence. It is tempting to conclude that if he exists, it is the atheists and agnostics that he loves best, among those with any pretensions to education. For they are the ones who have taken him most seriously.¹¹

So God may approve of (and reward) serious atheism more than blind faith.

These are pragmatic considerations against believing in God even if He *does* in fact exist. They suggest that it is more plausible that a supremely benevolent being would be indifferent to theist belief (or its absence) and may even prefer agnostics and atheists.

And whether or not the traditional God would respond in this way, Michael Martin (1983) points out the possibility that some other supernatural being might exist (the “Perverse Master”) who would eternally punish anyone who believes in God (or indeed in any other supernatural being). So, at the very worst, the possibilities that favor theist belief of the kind that Pascal highlights are counterbalanced by these other ones.

Let us turn now to consider the costs of believing in God if he doesn’t exist. Pascal (2008) thought that these costs are negligible. He wrote, “Now, what harm will befall you in taking this side? You will be faithful, humble, grateful, generous, a sincere friend, truthful.” We can set aside Pascal’s last remarks, which again make the dubious assumption that there is some special tie between belief in God and moral virtue. What Pascal overlooks are the significant costs of false belief in God.

Remarking on Pascal’s wager, Richard Dawkins writes:

Suppose we grant that there is indeed some small chance that God exists. Nevertheless, it could be said that you will lead a better, fuller life if you bet on his not existing, than if you bet on his existing and therefore squander your precious time on worshipping him, sacrificing to him, fighting and dying for him, etc. (2006, p.105)

As Dawkins points out, theist belief, at least when coupled with a broader set of religious commitments, can lead to very great sacrifices. In the most extreme case, think of religious martyrs who undergo horrific torture and suffer early death because they refuse to renounce their faith. Then there are ascetic practices: celibacy and other ways in which some devout believers radically renounce earthly pleasures and goods.

But even ordinary believers makes numerous smaller sacrifices, perhaps subjecting themselves to numerous onerous religious rules or otherwise just wasting much of the precious little time we have if death really is the end. Firm belief in an afterlife isn’t the best way to make the most of one’s short earthly life. If well-being depends, in whole or in part, on the satisfaction of our desires, then the truth of atheism would mean that many of the deepest desires of believers must go unfulfilled. Things get even worse on views of well-being that give prominence to knowledge of important facts about the universe, deep personal relationships, and significant achievements. After all, God doesn’t exist, then theists also have false beliefs about many important matters, including the nature of the universe we inhabit. And instead of having a deep relationship with a supreme being they will be worshipping, praying to, and obeying an imaginary being. More generally, to contribute to our well-being achievements should arguably relate to things that possess genuine value (see e.g., Bradford 2015). Many religious activities, projects, and goals may thus lose much (though obviously not all) of their potential prudential value.

It is sometimes claimed that life in a godless world is absurd but the life of a *believer* in a godless world is more obviously absurd: worshipping and praying to a nonexistent entity and shaping one’s entire life around the contents of sacred texts that are in fact no more than the crude musings of ancient scribes. The absurdity is even greater if prudential considerations, such as those underlying Pascal’s wager, were what led the believer to ignore powerful evidence against theism – essentially turning herself into a dupe for a gamble she is almost certain to lose.

Putting all this together we get the materials for a counter wager, or what Michael Martin (1983; 1990) calls the Atheist's Wager. For either theist belief (especially if motivated by prudential considerations) would lead to a worse outcome if God exists, or the possibilities in which it leads to infinite reward are cancelled out by those in which it leads to infinite punishment (or in which only atheism or agnosticism leads to such reward). And if God doesn't exist then, as we just saw, the cost of theist belief is very considerable.¹¹ So we should wager on atheism (or at least withhold belief).

I don't want to put too much weight on this line of argument. It is unlikely to "convert" many (or any) theists. Prudential considerations play a limited role at best in the case against theism, and prudential arguments against theism of the kind just sketched are usually intended merely as counter-responses to moves on the theist side. There is also a general worry about what pragmatic arguments of this sort – whether for theism or against it – can achieve. It is doubtful that someone that, for example, strongly leans towards atheism could really get herself to genuinely believe in God on the pragmatic grounds suggested by Pascal. At the end of the day this is an empirical question, though one on which surprisingly little progress has been made since Pascal's day.

Would it be Better for us if God Were to Exist?

I wrote that questions about the overall prudential value of believing in God cannot be fully addressed without taking into account the traditional question of God's existence: whether theist belief benefits or harms us may depend on whether or not God exists; Pascal's wager relies on this point. What is not always noted is that this question about the prudential value of belief in God in light of God's existence or nonexistence is *itself* just one part of a broader axiological question about the prudential value of God's existence. Just as we can ask whether God exists, we can ask:

(7) Would it be better or worse if God exists?

If God would admit us to heaven if we are morally good, regardless of whether we believe in him, then our prudential reasons for believing that God exists are much weaker. Theist belief would not matter much. But the promise of eternal bliss would *still* be an incredibly important way in which things would be better if God were to exist (or had existed). God's existence is likely to make a huge difference in value quite independently of any questions about what we happen to believe. As above, I will set aside here impartial or other moral readings of (7) and will approach this question only from a prudential standpoint: would it be overall better for us if God exists?¹³

This question has not received a great deal of attention – not even a tiny fraction of the attention that has been devoted, over the millennia, to debates about God's existence, or even to pragmatic questions about our reasons for believing in God.¹⁴ This is strange since, presumably, one key reason why we want to know whether God exists is that his existence is supposed to make a dramatic difference. If God's existence did not make things importantly better (or worse) for us, why should we care whether or not he exists? This question would be of merely theoretical interest, like questions about what happened immediately following the Big Bang.

One reason why such questions have been neglected is that pretty much everyone, whether theist or atheist, has assumed that it would be obviously better if God exists.¹⁵ God is supposed to be a perfectly good, omnipotent, and omniscient being who created the universe, and us, for a purpose and would ensure that everything will be for the best – if not right now, then eventually. The Christian or Muslim proselytizers you encounter at the street corner will typically begin by telling you about the great reward of immortality in heaven, while also sternly warning you of flames of hell that rightly await the wicked (including atheists). Theism promises cosmic justice and, in line with that, eternal bliss to those who deserve it. By contrast, the cosmos as described by modern science, while in many ways awe-inspiring, is rather harsh – as Richard Dawkins (2008, p. 133) puts it, it is a universe governed by “nothing but pitiless indifference.” The brief lives we can lead in such a universe will end in the grave and, for many, they are rather grim until that point.

For many atheists, the cosmic indifference we observe around us – as manifested, in particular, in the horrors often endured by humans and other animals here on little planet earth – is a powerful reason for answering (1) with a resounding “No.” However, this isn’t a reason to deny that things would be better if God were to exist – in fact, quite the contrary. Even if in our godless world there is no cosmic justice, and human lives are short and often nasty and brutish, surely if a supremely good God *were to exist* things would be very different. Colin McGinn (2004) expresses this thought when he described the disappointment of giving up on religious belief:

I would have liked religion to be true. I’d *like* it to be true, because I’d like to be ... I’d like there to be immortality, I’d like there to be rewards for those who have been virtuous and punishments for those who’ve not been virtuous ... You know, there’s not ... there’s no justice in this world and it would be good if there was some cosmic force that distributed justice in the proper way that it should be ...

As this quote illustrates, our answer to (7) also directly bears on our answer to:

(8) How should we feel about the question of God’s existence?

For example, if it would be far better if God exists, then even atheists should prefer that God exists, and lament the fact that he doesn’t, while agnostics should ardently hope that it turns out that God does exist.

Prudential Debunking Arguments against Theism

It is very doubtful that our answer to (7) should bear in any way on our answer to (1). The mere fact that things would be better if *p* in no way makes it more likely that *p* is true.¹⁶ As we find out pretty much every day, there is little overlap between the way things should be and the way they actually are. As the physicist Laurence Krauss writes (2012: xii): “The universe is the way it is, whether we like it or not. The existence or non-existence of a creator is independent of our desires. A world without God or purpose may seem harsh or pointless, but that alone doesn’t require God to actually exist.”

So we shouldn't believe that p just because it would be better if p were true. That, of course, doesn't mean that the fact that it would be better if p gives us any reason for thinking that p is *false*. But it is often enough a reason to be suspicious of *belief* in that proposition – humans are, after all, prone to wishful thinking and other forms of motivated cognition. Deeply wanting something to be true can make us seek confirming evidence while ignoring powerful arguments against a comforting view of things. That's a common human bias.

In this way, our answer to (7) can sometimes bear on our answer to (2). Still, the connection isn't tight. Motivated cognition is driven not by the good itself but by what, perhaps at some unconscious level, appears to us to be good. Conversely, we often enough fail to be moved by what we believe to be good – even by what we believe to be good for us. Goods that are too distant or abstract often lack visceral motivational pull.

Still, eternal bliss in heaven is pretty hard to beat. Is belief in such a future really the result of an entirely dispassionate inquiry? In *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud (1961) wrote: "It would be very nice if there were a God who created the world and was a benevolent providence, and if there were a moral order in the universe and an after-life; but it is a very striking fact that all this is exactly as we are bound to wish it to be." Elsewhere in the book he writes that our religious ideas are

... illusions, fulfilments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind. The secret of their strength lies in the strength of those wishes Thus the benevolent rule of a divine Providence allays our fear of the dangers of life; the establishment of a moral world-order ensures the fulfilment of the demands of justice, which have so often remained unfulfilled in human civilization; and the prolongation of earthly existence in a future life provides the local and temporal framework in which these wish-fulfilments shall take place (Freud 1961: 38).¹⁷

These empirical speculations can form the basis for a debunking argument against theism. The basic idea is that if we believe in p because of factors that do not actually track the truth of p , then finding out that this is the true causal source of some belief should undermine that belief – not in the sense of showing it to be false, but in the sense of defeating whatever justification we had previously thought it to have.¹⁸

We should not exaggerate the force of such debunking arguments. They make strong causal claims: that a certain belief really has its source in some motive or evaluation, not in experience or evidence. It is not easy to show that such claims are true.¹⁹ And it is generally more appropriate – as well as more respectful – to focus on people's arguments for their views, not on the psychological undercurrents that may or may not shape them. If, say, the cosmological argument were sound, then it would support theism in exactly the same way whether or not anyone's belief in God is driven by such argument or by wishful thinking.

Still, once the substantive arguments have been scrutinized, such psychological considerations can help explain why what appear to be weak arguments are nevertheless confidently endorsed. And when theists appeal, not to argument but to some direct experience or *sensus divinitatis*, then close attention to the possible psychological sources of such direct evidence does become appropriate.

Another limit to such a debunking strategy is that it invites a counter-reply. Theists have long speculated about the nefarious sources of disbelief. Pascal, for example, thought that “Men despise religion. They hate it and are afraid it may be true.”²⁰ Surprisingly, there are atheists who make similar claims. Thomas Nagel (1997, p. 130) has famously remarked: “I hope there is no God! I don’t want there to be a God; I don’t want the universe to be like that” (see also Nagel 2009).

We can call such an attitude to God’s existence “anti-theism.” Nagel suggests that it is such anti-theist “fear of religion” that makes reductive naturalism attractive to many fellow atheists and underlies their resistance to alternative views, a speculation that various theist thinkers have happily endorsed (see, e.g., Plantinga 2012). But I doubt Nagel is right. I think he is conflating here the common resistance to the possibility that one’s core views are deeply mistaken and fear that some opposing view is true – attitudes with very different emphases. So far as I can see, a majority of atheists would join Freud and McGinn in wishing that theism were true.²¹

How God’s Existence Could Make Things Worse for Us

But we can set aside such hypotheses about the covert motives of theists and atheists. A more interesting question is why Nagel wants God not to exist, and whether that attitude could be justified. Nagel says little to defend it, and he sometimes gives the impression that he regards it as a mere psychological fact. But what we want, hope for, or regret, is not immune to criticism. If the universe as described by theism would be vastly superior to the atheist alternative then it would be hard to justify wanting God not to exist. Indeed, from a moral standpoint such an attitude might even seem shameful – the rejection of a supremely good being, not to mention cosmic justice and eternal life for those we love, and for those who have suffered horribly in their earthly life (McClean 2015). From a prudential standpoint such a preference seems just foolish.

But I think Nagel’s attitude can be defended. To defend it, we need to argue, in reply to (7), that God’s existence would make things significantly worse, at least for some of us. If this argument is successful, it will constitute a different kind of prudential objection to theism – here, not to theism *qua* belief in God, but to theism itself, the claim that God exists. And this won’t be an objection in the sense of a reason for thinking that God doesn’t exist, but an objection in the sense of finding that possibility *undesirable* – and of having a legitimate prudential ground for complaint (or regret) if God does exist.

Let us set aside some straightforward but illegitimate, or simply uninteresting, prudential grounds for such a complaint. Obviously if God’s existence would mean that there is a hell to which all atheists will be sent then atheists would have an obvious reason for wanting God not to exist. But I don’t think that this is the kind of thing that worries Nagel. We want to identify a sense in which things would be worst for us, or at least for some of us, but not because this is what we deserve.

We can also set aside complaints that have as their target the existence of some divine being that is less than perfectly good or even evil. Christopher Hitchens explains that he doesn’t want theism to be true because it would amount to a “permanent, inviolated,

regulated dictatorship which you are told is for your own good. I can't think of anything worse" (Brown 2011). But it's obvious that we have both prudential and moral reasons to wish that the vindictive deity described by many religions and sacred texts didn't exist. It's much harder to see how we could justify wanting a *perfectly good supreme being* not to exist. In fact, the idea that the existence of such a being could make things worse for those who don't deserve it may seem simply incoherent – how could a perfectly good, omniscient, and omnipotent being allow such gratuitous evil?

But it isn't incoherent. In his autobiography *The Words*, Sartre writes how, as a child, he last felt the presence of God as a judging gaze observing him illicitly playing with matches in the bathroom, leading Sartre to respond with outrage at God's "indiscretion" (Sartre 1964, p. 102).²² Sartre was outraged at this invasion of his privacy, but if omniscience is one of God's essential properties then this outrage was misplaced. It's not as if God had chosen to snoop on little Jean-Paul. That God knows each and every thing that Jean-Paul was doing, indeed each and every thought or feeling that passed through Jean-Paul's mind, is just the way things necessarily are in a universe in which an omniscient being exists; there's nothing that God can do about this. But this doesn't make the absolute and constant surveillance we must endure in a theist universe much better.

While violations of our privacy have moral import, my focus here is on how they bear on the interests of particular individuals. And it's important that the complaint against theism that they support isn't moral – I take it that God would be blameless. The complaint is against God's existence, not against God Himself.

The claim is that, because of God's omniscience, God's existence would make things worse for us, at least in one significant respect, because of its impact on the kind of privacy we can enjoy in a theist universe. This evaluative conclusion depends on two premises. The first, which I take to be fairly uncontroversial, is that omniscience is a necessary attribute of God and that it implies complete knowledge of our lives, including our innermost thoughts and feelings. The second is that having God's gaze upon on in this way is unwelcome, a kind of harm, at least to some of us. This is a substantive value claim that seems to follow from standard accounts of the moral significance of privacy but it can be contested (see, e.g., Kraay and Dragos 2013). Defending this substantive claim is beyond the scope of this chapter.²³ My aim here is only to show that it is perfectly coherent to hold that God's existence could make our lives worse in important respects.

In any event, this worry about privacy is only one element in a broader anti-theist concern about the subordinate position we will occupy in a theist universe. Such a universe would be fundamentally hierarchical, and we will be somewhere near the bottom of this hierarchy. That is why such a universe is unwelcome – despite the fact that the being at the top of the hierarchy is supposed to be supremely good. The worry is about the position we occupy in such a world, not that God might abuse His power over us. In such a world we must eternally remain in a childlike state. We can never become our own masters, fully independent beings who shape their lives in light of purposes that they adopt and define.

The worry about loss of privacy can be assimilated into this larger concern about our subordinate position in a theist universe. This larger concern can be developed in several ways. One further worry is generated by God's status as creator. If our existence,

and the existence of everything that matters to us, is due to him, then it seems we owe him a debt. It may also mean that it would be wrong for us to do as we will with God's creation, and perhaps even with ourselves. And if God created the universe, and us within it, he presumably did that for a purpose. If there is such a cosmic plan, and we (and others) are here to play our part in it, this constrains our ability to lead our lives according to our own plan. Perhaps most fundamentally, if God exists then his moral status would be vastly greater than ours. We would not be equal members in a Kingdom of Ends. This seems to me undesirable in itself but is also likely to have concrete normative implications, such as duties to obey God and to worship him. There is something deeply undignified in occupying such a subservient position, in surrendering one's will to that of another, however supremely benevolent.²⁴

Very many theists will agree that God's existence will have these implications though, again, they are likely to deny that such limits to our independence are unwelcome. This is a disagreement about value, and one that isn't surprising. A theist view of the universe can hardly be expected to put the value of genuine independence and cosmic equality to the fore. In this way our answer to (1) may influence our answer to (7), and thus to (8), though there's nothing incoherent in the idea of an "anti-theist" theist who wishes that God didn't exist – what we believe, and what we want, are different matters. And as we saw, plenty of atheists regret God's absence.²⁵

It is important not to overstate what the worry about independence can achieve. If correct, it supports the conclusion that

(9) God's existence would make our lives worse in important respects.

But there is a large gap between that conclusion and the much stronger claim that

(10) God's existence would make our lives *overall* worse.

For even if we lose something in having our lives completely open to divine scrutiny, and in being mere cogs in the cosmic plan rather than our own masters, surely this is more than compensated for by eternal bliss in heaven for us and for those we love?²⁶

Even if it would be overall better for us if God exists, the unwelcome implications of theism should greatly qualify any regret we feel when we conclude that theism is false. But I think that there is space for a stronger conclusion. Eternal bliss might be nice but I think we can be justified in rejecting such bliss if it means we must forever remain in a position of childlike subordination and submission. We can think of such a life of subordination as worse for us compared to the much briefer and often miserable life we have in the naturalist alternative; true independence might have lexical priority over happiness. This is a strong claim. But we don't need to make it to be justified in hoping that God doesn't exist, and that we do not occupy such a subordinate position. We may reject such a status even if it would come along with what is an overall prudentially better life. We can give Nagel's anti-theist reply to (8) even if we don't think that (10) is true.

Perhaps needless to say, there will be plenty who will eagerly hope for eternal bliss and regard this as more than compensating for the curtailing of our independence. However, *even* those who hold this preference shouldn't wish that God exists (or had existed). Let me explain why.

Claims about what would be better or worse are comparative claims. We cannot answer them without being clear about what two possibilities we are comparing. When we consider claims like (7), (9), and (10), one of the possibilities is obviously that in which God exists. I have been assuming here a familiar traditional conception of God, but a universe in which God exists may take numerous forms even on such a conception. For our purposes here, however, what matters is that God's existence means eternal bliss to many, perhaps to all of us – or at least that's an assumption I will grant.²⁷

But there is more to be said about the other side of the comparison. What possibility are we considering, exactly, when we consider an alternative in which God doesn't exist? Implicitly, at least, we've been assuming that what we get is the kind of universe described by current natural science – some version of the naturalist view associated with most forms of contemporary atheism – Dawkins's blind and pitiless universe. And that is indeed the universe we are most likely to inhabit if God doesn't exist. And, to repeat, I suspect that enough of those who agree with me that the hierarchical nature of a theist universe is unwelcome would still probably prefer eternal bliss and submission to brief, miserable independence. It's important, however, to remember that even if naturalism (in one of its forms) is the most plausible way in which atheism is likely to be true, it's also merely one way in which atheism could be true. In particular, it's easy enough to imagine possible atheist worlds in which we do enjoy all or at least most of the goods we will supposedly get in a theist universe. And surely, eternal bliss *without* submission is superior to eternal bliss with submission.²⁸

So, even if the theist universe would be better for us than the rather miserable naturalist godless alternative, it will still be inferior to some other possible atheist worlds. Leibniz was doubly wrong. Not only is our universe far from being the best of all possible worlds, the best possible worlds are actually ones from which God is absent.

Nihilism, Meaning, and Significance

Theists sometimes argue that if God doesn't exist, then our lives would have no meaning, and would not be worth living. But our lives are worth living. Therefore God must exist. This would be a prudential argument for a positive answer to (1). As such, it also gives us epistemic (*not* pragmatic) reasons to also give a positive answer to (2). In its strong form, such an argument assumes that atheism implies evaluative nihilism, the view that nothing (including our lives) has any value. Now it is very doubtful that atheism entails the truth of evaluative nihilism, and there are many secular accounts of value on offer. It is true, however, that atheism is at least compatible with evaluative nihilism, and that metaphysical naturalism makes nihilism at least a possibility. By contrast, the truth of theism would entail the falsity of nihilism since if a supremely good being exists then at least one thing would possess value. In any event, if there are powerful arguments to doubt that God exists, and that conclusion did imply the truth of nihilism, then I don't see why we shouldn't conclude that nihilism is true. And it's not as if the truth of nihilism would be a bad thing: after all if nihilism is true then nothing would be either good or bad, including nihilism itself. If nihilism is true, we couldn't even truly say that nihilism is worse than some alternative, including the theist one. And while nihilism would mean that our lives wouldn't be good, it also means that they couldn't be bad.

It would mean, in effect, that all the apparent evil in the world is illusory. Nihilism is certainly nothing to worry about.

So let us set evaluative nihilism aside. But even if atheism doesn't imply nihilism, and our lives can be good (or bad) even if God doesn't exist, it might still be true that in such a godless world our lives lack meaning, and that, if naturalism is true, then we humans are merely insignificant specks of dust in an immense and indifferent universe. Again, these are views that are held by many. Since my focus here is on objections to theism, I will not look closely at these claims about atheism.²⁹ I will argue instead that a theist universe needn't be so hospitable to meaning and significance.

Consider first meaning. On one way of thinking about what gives point to our lives is that our wanting to go on is conditional on our ability to successfully pursue certain personal projects that are central to our identity (see Williams 1981). I have argued above that if God exists, this will impose significant constraints on our ability to realize the value of independence in its various manifestations: control over privacy, the ability to plot one's own course through life, and to be the moral equal of other persons. To the extent that these values are central to the core projects of some people – and I believe that they are central to the identity of many atheists – then if God exists the lives of these people would be rendered absurd. Theism would entail that at least some lives lack meaning (Kahane 2011a).

Things are even worse with respect to our significance. As I understand this notion, to possess significance is to possess such value, compared to other existing things, as to merit great attention and concern. For us to possess *cosmic* significance, we, and our value, needs to stand out in some way when the entire cosmos is in view. But if God exists then obviously it is he who is by far the most significant thing at the cosmic scale, while we would be of negligible importance at best. By contrast, if God doesn't exist *and* we are alone in the universe then we would arguably possess the most cosmic significance. So the truth of atheism is actually our best shot at a measure of cosmic significance.³⁰

So atheism isn't such a bitter pill and theism far from being prudentially perfect. God's existence would make things worse for us in multiple ways. Now I don't see why that should give us any reason for thinking God doesn't exist. But it gives us legitimate prudential reasons for wanting him not to exist.³¹

Conclusion

Atheism is rarely presented as good news. The vast universe we find around us is indifferent at best, and in many ways grim. Human life is short and, for many, pretty miserable. There is no one out there to guarantee that justice will be upheld and it's doubtful that we humans would ever step up to the role. This, however, is hardly a reason to believe that God exists – or even to wager on his existence. If anything, it is a reason (though not a terribly strong one) to be suspicious of beliefs that seem to dismiss the appearances in favor of a soothing, rosier alternative – especially one that promises to fulfill our deepest wishes.

Still, the godless universe we inhabit is not as bad as it seems. On reflection, we can see that it brings with it distinctive advantages. Blissful eternity in heaven may have its undeniable attractions but even if God is a supremely good being, there is an oppressive

side to his existence. The truth of theism is by no means entirely welcome. In a universe governed by such a God we could never been fully independent, or enjoy complete privacy. God's existence would make things worse for us – worse enough to justify hoping that God doesn't exist.

I had earlier dismissed the suggestion that atheism is driven by fear of God. But if my anti-theist argument is successful, doesn't that revive the worry that denial of God's existence is prudentially motivated, at least in those who endorse this argument, and therefore risks debunking? This depends on the causal order. In my case, atheism long preceded any consideration of such questions. And it is not as if I am deeply afraid of God's existence, as Nagel claims to be. The possibility that the classical theist God actually exists seems to me so radically implausible that it arouses no interesting emotion.

Notes

- 1 To simplify things, I will regard the possible intrinsic value of believing that p as one of the possible consequences of believing that p .
- 2 Since our focus is on criticism of theism, I will largely ignore the distinction between believing God doesn't exist and simply not believing God exists. However, it's possible that, for example, belief in God has worse consequences compared to atheism but better ones compared to agnosticism.
- 3 There are competing accounts of prudential value. On hedonist views, a good life will contain much pleasure and joy and little pain. On desire-satisfaction views, a good life is one where many of our desires are satisfied. On objective views, a good life is one that involves possession of, or appropriate relation to, a range of objective goods. Such goods may include deep personal relationships, achievements, knowledge, meaning, appreciation of beauty, and moral virtue – as well as pleasure and joy. I strongly lean towards such an objective view but much of what I will say here is neutral between these competing views. For an excellent resource on philosophical approaches to well-being, see Fletcher (2016). If one were to hold an objective view on which moral virtue directly contributes to one's well-being, then the distinction between moral and prudential considerations would be much harder to draw. I will ignore this complication here.
- 4 For example, the Pew Forum (2016) reports that highly religious Americans were happier than others.
- 5 According to the 2017 *World Happiness Report*, the world's happiest countries were Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland, Finland, the Netherlands, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and Sweden (in that order). See Helliwell, Layard, and Sachs (2017).
- 6 For example, there is considerable evidence that the positive relationship between religiosity and life-satisfaction is almost entirely due to greater social ties. And this positive relation holds only in countries when the majority is religious (see Diener and Seligman 2002; Okulicz-Kozaryn 2010).
- 7 To complicate things still more, since both agnosticism and atheism are purely negative doxastic stances, it's doubtful that, on their own, they have any exciting causal upshot. It is atheism coupled with a particular positive worldview such as naturalism that might have such an upshot.
- 8 Something like this thought may also be the background to the Buddha's indifference to metaphysical questions such as (1) – after all, he held that we should set them aside precisely because they do *not* bear on the critical prudential issue of release from the cycle of suffering. For discussion, see Kapstein (2016).

- 9 Thomas Jefferson in a letter to Peter Carr, 10 August 1787.
- 10 A character in Camus's *The Plague* suggests, in a similar vein, that '[s]ince the order of the world is shaped by death, mightn't it be better for God if we refuse to believe in Him and struggle with all our might against death, without raising our eyes toward the heavens where He sits in silence?' (Camus 2012, p. 128).
- 11 Jordan (2006) marshals evidence of the kind surveyed earlier about the relation between theist belief and happiness to argue that Pascal's wager can be made to work because it is better to have theist belief even if God doesn't exist. Even if this evidence is correct it would support this conclusion only on a simple hedonist view of well-being. But hedonism is implausible and few theists are hedonists. And as I hope to have shown, on many other views of well-being the cost of false belief in God would range from significant to catastrophic. Now you might wonder about the parallel costs of believing in atheism if God *does* exist. And no doubt that would mean a failure to grasp the most fundamental facts about the universe, and a failure to orient our lives around these facts. But if – and that's admittedly a big "if" – lack of theist belief doesn't block admission to a blissful afterlife, then the costs of false atheist belief are fairly negligible, in the large scale of things – our earthly lives would be but a blip, and we would have the whole of eternity to get things right.
- 12 On an impartial reading of (7), this question is concerned with whether God's existence makes the world itself better or worse. For discussion of this other question, see Kahane (2011a) as well as Penner and Loughheed (2015).
- 13 Though, for some recent discussion, see Rescher (1990); Kahane (2011a); Kahane (2013); Kahane (2017); Mawson (2012); Luck & Ellerby (2012); Kraay & Dragos (2013); Davis (2014); Penner (2015); McLean (2015); Dumsday (2016); Penner & Loughheed (2015).
- 14 Writing in 1725, Samuel Clarke (1998) starts his argument against atheism by claiming that "nothing is as certain and undeniable as that man, considered without the protection and conduct of a superior being, is in a far worse case than upon supposition of the being and government of God, and of men's being under his peculiar conduct, protection, and favour." Clarke therefore presses atheists to at least concede that God's existence is "a thing very desirable." I'm grateful to Richard Davis for this reference.
- 15 If theism is true, and the universe is governed by a supremely benevolent, omnipotent being, then we might have some reason to think that things are as they should be, or as best as they could be. Whether or not that is correct – and things get complicated by the presence of free will, or the possibility that God is a satisficer – this consideration obviously can't bear on the question of whether God exists in the first place.
- 16 Feuerbach (1881) had earlier argued that "God is the existence corresponding to my wishes and feelings: he is the just one, the good, who fulfils my wishes. Nature, this world, is an existence which contradicts my wishes, my feelings." In his poem "Despair" (1881), Tennyson describes God as "[t]he guess of a worm in the dust and the shadow of its desire."
- 17 See Kahane (2011b) for general discussion of debunking arguments and Wilkins and Griffiths (2012) for an application to the case of religious belief. See also Linford and Megill (2018).
- 18 For criticism from a theist perspective, see Plantinga (2000: Chapter 11). For a sophisticated attempt to defend the claim that religious belief is shaped by what people desire, see Nichols (2004).
- 19 He adds: "The cure [is to ... make it attractive, make good men wish it were true, and then show that it is]" Pascal (2008).
- 20 For a nice statement of such a preference by a prominent atheist, see Weinberg (2008).
- 21 For similar remarks see McGinn (2004). Plantinga (2000, p. 195) similarly writes: "Many people thoroughly dislike the idea of an omnipotent, omniscient being monitoring their every activity, privy to their every thought, and passing judgment on all they do or think."

- 22 For further discussion, see Kahane (2011a; 2018).
- 23 There are obvious affinities between these concerns about independence and James Rachels's (1997) claim that God's existence is incompatible with moral autonomy. But Rachels thinks that this point is the basis for a moral argument against God's *existence*. This isn't an argument I find persuasive and I think that Rachels's claims have more force when interpreted in anti-theist terms – as reasons for wanting God not to exist rather than for denying his existence. Though notice that to worry that we won't be fully independent in a theist universe doesn't require the much stronger claim that in such a world we couldn't be autonomous beings. For another argument that has strong affinities with my anti-theist worries, see Johnston (2011: 50-2), and generally his criticism of traditional theism as a form of idolatry; indeed, at least some of these antithetic concerns will lose their force if God isn't any kind of person.
- 24 When I write that our view about (1) may influence our answer to (7), I mean that our metaphysical views may make us more or less receptive to certain evaluative claims, not that the truth of these claims would vary depending on the metaphysical background.
- 25 This assumes that immortality is such a great thing. For doubts, see Williams (1973).
- 26 Such comparisons would become problematic, perhaps even confused, if either God's existence is necessary (as many theists hold), or if the very idea of God is incoherent (as some atheists hold). For then we would be comparing a necessary actuality with a strict impossibility, a "counter-possible." For discussion, see Kahane (2014) as well as Kahane (2018).
- 27 This argument is spelled out in some detail in Kahane (2018). These atheist universes in which God doesn't exist yet we enjoy eternal bliss are of course very distant from the naturalist universe we actually inhabit. They are merely fantastic possibilities. But we are now asking whether God's existence would be better than atheist alternatives, not whether these alternatives are true or even remotely probable. And for a confident naturalist atheist the probability that God exists is at low as that of these fantastic atheist alternatives – or even lower.
- 28 For discussion of the relation between theism and meaning – both the meaning *of* lives and meaning *in* lives – see Wolf (2010) and Metz (2013).
- 29 I develop this argument in greater detail in Kahane (2014). Atheism certainly doesn't guarantee that we are cosmically significant. That depends on whether we are the only intelligent beings in the universe – a possibility that is of low probability but, at least at the moment, still very much on the table.
- 30 Notice, however, that the standard argument from evil, *if* stated in the first person, is really a prudential argument for a negative answer to (1) – moving from the claim that one's life contains great and undeserved evils to the conclusion that it's likely that a supremely good, omniscient and omnipotent God doesn't exist.

References

- Bradford, G. (2015) *Achievement*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, M. (2011) "Godless in Tumourville: Christopher Hitchens interview." *The Telegraph*, 25 March.
- Camus, A. (2012) *The Plague*. New York: Vintage. Original work published 1947.
- Clarke, S. (1998) *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God: And Other Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Original work published 1725.
- Dawkins, R. (2008) *River out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life*. New York: Basic Books.
- Davis, S. (2014) "On preferring that God not exist (or that God exist)." *Faith and Philosophy* 31: 143–159.

- Diener, E., and Seligman, M. (2002) "Very happy people." *Psychological Science* 13: 81–84.
- Dumsday, T. (2016) "Anti-theism and the problem of divine hiddenness." *Sophia* 55: 179–195.
- Feuerbach, L. (1881) *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. M. Evans. London: Trübner and Co.
- Fletcher, G. (ed.) (2016). *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Well-Being*. London: Routledge.
- Freud, S. (1961) *The Future of an Illusion*, ed. J. Strachey, New York: Norton.
- Helliwell, J., Layard, R., and Sachs, J. (2017) *World Happiness Report 2017*. New York: Sustainable Development Solutions Network.
- Hume, D. (2007) *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. D. Coleman, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Original work published 1779.
- Johnston, M. (2011) *Saving God: Religion after Idolatry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jordan, J. (2006) *Pascal's wager: Pragmatic arguments and belief in God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kapstein, M. (2016) "The Buddhist refusal of theism." *Diogenes* 52: 61–65.
- Kahane, G. (2011a) "Should we want God to exist?." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 82: 674–696.
- Kahane, G. (2011b) "Evolutionary debunking arguments." *Noûs* 45: 103–125.
- Kahane, G. (2014) "Our cosmic insignificance." *Noûs* 48: 745–772.
- Kahane, G. (2017) "If there is a hole it is not God-shaped," in K. Kraay (ed.) *Does God Matter? Essays on the Axiological Implications of Theism*. London: Routledge.
- Kraay, K., and Dragos, C. (2013) "On preferring God's non-existence." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 43: 157–178.
- Krauss, L. (2012) *A Universe from Nothing*. New York: Free Press.
- Linford, D., and Megill, J. (2018) "Cognitive bias, the axiological question, and the epistemic probability of theistic belief," in M. Szatkowski (ed.) *Ontology of Theistic Beliefs: Meta-Ontological Perspectives*. Berlin: de Gruyter, pp. 77–92.
- Luck, M., and Ellerby, N. (2012) "Should we want God not to exist?" *Philo* 15: 193–199.
- Martin, M. (1983) "Pascal's wager as an argument for not believing in God." *Religious Studies* 19: 57–64.
- Martin, M. (1990) *Atheism: A Philosophical Justification*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Mawson, T. (2012) "On determining how important it is whether or not there is a God." *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 4: 95–105.
- Metz, T. (2013) *Meaning in Life: An Analytic Study*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McGinn, C. (2004) *The Atheism Tapes: Colin McGinn*. BBC documentary presented by Jonathan Miller.
- McLean, G. (2015) "Antipathy to God." *Sophia* 54: 13–24.
- Nagel, T. (1997) *The Last Word*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nagel, T. (2009) "Secular philosophy and the religious temperament," in *Secular Philosophy and the Religious Temperament: Essays 2002–2008*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nichols, S. (2004) "Is religion what we want? Motivation and the cultural transmission of religious representations." *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 4: 347–371.
- Okulicz-Kozaryn, A. (2010) "Religiosity and life satisfaction across nations." *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* 13, 155–169.
- Pascal, B. (2008) *Pensées and Other Writings*, trans. H. Levi, ed. A. Levi. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Original work published 1670.
- Penner, M. (2015) "Personal anti-theism and the meaningful life argument." *Faith and Philosophy* 32: 325–337.
- Penner, M., and Loughheed, K. (2015) "Pro-theism and the added value of morally good agents." *Philosophia Christi* 17, Summer: 53–70.
- Pew Forum (2016) *Religion in Everyday Life*. Available at <http://www.pewforum.org/2016/04/12/religion-in-everyday-life/> (accessed 14 September 2018).

- Plantinga, A. (2000) *Warranted Christian Belief*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Plantinga, A. (2012) "Why Darwinist materialism is wrong." Review of Nagel's *Mind and Cosmos*, *The New Republic*, 12 November. Available at <https://newrepublic.com/article/110189/why-darwinist-materialism-wrong> (accessed 13 September 2018).
- Rachels, J. (1997) "God and moral autonomy," in *Can Ethics Provide Answers? And Other Essays in Moral Philosophy*. Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 109–123.
- Rescher, N. (1990) "On faith and belief," in *Human Interests*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 166–178.
- Russell, B. (1999) "What is an agnostic?" in S. Andersson and L. Greenspan (eds.) *Russell on Religion*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 41–49.
- Strawson, G. (2012) "What can be proved about God?" Letter to the Editor, *New York Review of Books*, December 6.
- Tennyson, A. (1881) "Despair," reprinted in C. Blyth (ed.) *Decadent Verse: An Anthology of Late-Victorian Poetry, 1872–1900*. London: Anthem Press (2009).
- Weinberg, S. (2008) "Without God." *New York Review of Books*, 25 September. Reprinted in *Lake Views: This World and the Universe*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Wilkins, J. S., and Griffiths, P. E. (2013) "Evolutionary debunking arguments in three domains: Fact, value and religion," in G. Dawes and J. Maclaurin (eds.) *A New Science of Religion*. New York: Routledge, pp. 133–146.
- Williams, B. (1973) "The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the tedium of immortality," in *Problems of the Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 82–100.
- Williams, B. (1981) "Persons, character and morality," in *Moral Luck*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wolf, S. (2010) *Meaning in Life and Why It Matters*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Part IV

Metaphysics

Freedom

ALFRED MELE

Some conceptions of free will make its existence depend on the existence of something supernatural. Others do not. It may surprise some readers to learn that a recent debate about whether free will depends on the supernatural was prompted by experiments in neuroscience. After I provide some philosophical background on free will, I discuss that debate and then branch out.

Free Will: Philosophical Background

What is free will? What does the expression “free will” mean? Traditional philosophical answers fall into two groups: compatibilist and incompatibilist. These groups disagree about the conceptual relationship between free will and determinism. As determinism is commonly understood in the literature on free will, it is the thesis that a complete statement of the laws of nature together with a complete description of the entire universe at any point in time logically entails a complete description of the entire universe at any other point in time. (Because the universe includes us, a complete description of the universe five minutes from now includes a description of what you and I are doing five minutes from now.)

Compatibilism is the thesis that free will is compatible with the truth of determinism. It is the thesis that even if determinism is true of a universe – the actual universe or some possible ones – a being in that universe may have free will. Owing to their familiarity with orthodox non-deterministic interpretations of quantum mechanics, the great majority of contemporary compatibilists do not contend that determinism is true; but they do contend that, even if it were true, that would not preclude our acting freely or of our own free will.

Incompatibilism is the thesis that free will is incompatible with the truth of determinism. In the incompatibilist group, most answers to the question what “free will”

means come from libertarians. Libertarianism is the conjunction of incompatibilism and the thesis that some people at least sometimes have free will. Some incompatibilists argue that no one has free will. They argue that even the falsity of determinism creates no place for free will.

Compatibilist theories of free will distinguish deterministic causation from compulsion. If determinism is true, then my eating corn flakes for breakfast today and my walking to class today were deterministically caused; and so were a certain compulsive hand-washer's washing his hands dozens of times today, a certain delusional person's spending a few hours hunting for beings from another galaxy, and a certain person's handing over money to gunmen who threatened to kill him. But there is an apparent difference. I am sane and free from compulsions, and I received no coercive threats today. The basic compatibilist idea is (roughly) that when mentally healthy people act intentionally and rationally in the absence of compulsion and coercion they act freely or of their own free will, and an action's being deterministically caused does not suffice for its being compelled or coerced. More precisely, typical compatibilists would deem satisfaction of conditions such as these *sufficient* for acting of one's own free will.

Like compatibilists, libertarians tend to assert that when mentally healthy people act intentionally and rationally in the absence of compulsion and coercion they act freely, but they insist that determinism is incompatible with free will. When the debate is running smoothly, compatibilists and incompatibilists mean the same thing by "determinism" and disagree about whether determinism is compatible with free will. If the overwhelming majority of living compatibilists and incompatibilists alike do not believe that determinism is true, why do philosophers still bother to argue about whether compatibilism is true or false? Partly because philosophical debates with a very long history do not die easily. But also partly because this debate bears on some important questions: What is meant by "free will"? How high is the bar for free will? If, even though determinism is false, free will is compatible with it, that might tell us something interesting about free will that goes beyond the mere fact of its compatibility with determinism. And the same goes for incompatibility.

It is open to libertarians to claim that a deterministically caused action may be indirectly free if it inherits its freedom from free actions that are not deterministically caused – that is, from directly free actions. To skirt some complexities, I limit my discussion of free actions to actions that are directly free.

Libertarian views of free will divide into three broad kinds: event-causal, agent-causal, and non-causal. According to typical event-causal libertarian views, the proximate causes of directly free actions indeterministically cause them. This is a consequence of the typical event-causal libertarian ideas that directly free actions have proximate causes and that if an agent (directly) freely does *A* at a time *t*, then in some possible, hypothetical scenario in which the entire past up to *t* and the laws of nature are the same, he does not do *A* at *t*. It should be noted that the proximate causes of actions, including actions that are decisions, are internal to agents. Even a driver's sudden decision to hit his brakes in an emergency situation is not proximately caused by events in the external world. Perception of whatever the source of the emergency happens to be – for example, a dog darting into traffic – is causally involved. And how the driver decides to react to what he sees depends on, among other things, his driving

skills and habits, whether or not he is aware of what is happening directly behind him, and his preferences. A driver who likes driving over dogs and relishes opportunities to do that would probably react very differently than a normal person would. And a driver who, benefiting from his rear view mirror, sees that a sudden stop would cause a serious collision may behave differently than a driver who is unaware of the car just behind him. In light of the general point about the proximate causation of actions, typical event-causal libertarianism encompasses a commitment to *agent-internal* indeterminism.

Whereas the laws of nature that apply to deterministic causation are exceptionless, those that apply most directly to indeterministic causation are instead probabilistic. So if the occurrence of x (at time $t1$) indeterministically causes the occurrence of y (at $t2$), then a complete description of the universe at (and before) $t1$ together with a complete statement of the laws of nature does *not* entail that y occurs at $t2$. There was at most a high probability that the occurrence of x at $t1$ would cause the occurrence of y at $t2$. Typically, events like deciding to give a hitchhiker a ride – as distinct from the physical actions involved in actually giving the person a ride – are deemed mental *actions*. Suppose that Harry's decision to give a hitchhiker a ride is indeterministically caused by, among other things, his thinking that he should do this. Because the causation is indeterministic, he might not have decided at the time to give him a ride given exactly the same internal and external conditions. In this way, some libertarians seek to secure the possibility of doing otherwise that they require for free action.

What libertarians require for free action that determinism precludes is not merely that agents sometimes have open to them more than one future that is compatible with the combination of the past and the laws of nature, but also that, on some occasions, which possible future becomes actual is in some sense and to some degree up to the agents. Event-causal libertarians require people themselves to be indeterministic in some suitable way – in other words that some relevant things that happen under the skin are indeterministically caused by other such things. The focus is on mental events (or their neural correlates), as opposed, for example, to indeterministically caused muscle spasms – and, more specifically, on mental events that have a significant bearing on action (or the neural correlates of these events).

Quantum mechanics, according to leading interpretations, is indeterministic. But indeterminism at that level does not ensure that any human brains sometimes operate indeterministically in ways appropriate for free action. One possibility is that any indeterminism in the human brain itself is simply irrelevant to the production of actions. A scientific discovery that this possibility is an actuality would show that we do not have free will according to some familiar libertarian conceptions of it.

Agent-causal libertarianism features agent causation – causation of an effect by an agent or person, as opposed to causation of an effect by states or events of any kind, including a person's motivational and representational states. Think of causation as a relation between cause and effect. In ordinary event causation – for example, a falling tree limb knocking over a fence – both cause and effect are events. The cause includes the limb's crashing into the fence, and the fence's collapsing is an effect. These events are connected by the relation *causation*. In agent causation, an agent is connected by the relation causation to an effect – and connected in a way that is not reducible to a connection among events. Whereas most agent-causal libertarians prefer their agent

causation straight (Chisholm 1966; O'Connor 2000; Taylor 1966), some mix it with event causation in a theory about the production of free actions (Clarke 2003).

A straightforward non-causal libertarian view asserts that only uncaused actions can be free (Ginet 2007; Goetz 2008).¹ How uncaused actions are possible is a mystery to me (Mele 2003, Chapter 2), but I let that pass here.

Free Will, Neuroscience, and the Supernatural

My discussion of compatibilism in the preceding section was brief. That is explained by a simple fact. Even a brief description of compatibilism makes it evident that free will, on a compatibilist conception of it, would seem not to depend on anything supernatural. Seemingly, there is nothing essentially or necessarily supernatural about being mentally healthy and acting intentionally and rationally in the absence of compulsion and coercion.

Some contemporary libertarians make a point of emphasizing that their view of free will is just as naturalistic as a typical compatibilist view. Robert Kane (1996, pp. 17, 115–118, 213) is a good example. His “free agency principle” reads in part as follows: “In the attempt to formulate [a] libertarian account of free agency ... we shall not appeal to categories or kinds of entities ... that are *not also needed by nonlibertarian* (compatibilist or determinist) *accounts of free agency*” (Kane 1996, p. 116). I am not a libertarian myself, but neither am I a compatibilist. I am agnostic about compatibilism, and I develop a compatibilist view of free will for compatibilists and an event-causal libertarian one for incompatibilists (Mele 2006). Both of my views of free will are naturalistic; they do not appeal to anything supernatural.

Whereas Kane goes out of his way to distance his libertarian view from earlier libertarian views with supernatural elements, partly by engaging critically with these earlier views (Kane 1996, Chapters 1 and 7), I simply make my naturalism about free will explicit and forge ahead – on two fronts, one compatibilist and the other libertarian. St. Augustine, Bishop Bramhall, and a host of others have advanced views of free will with theological elements, as Kane (1996, pp. 7–11) observes. But that was then, when theism was taken for granted by the great majority of scholars. What about now? To set more of the stage for a discussion of this question, I turn to neuroscience.

Beginning in the early 1980s, Benjamin Libet conducted some interesting experiments (Libet, Wright, and Gleason 1982; Libet 1985) that were said to show we never made conscious decisions and that free will therefore is an illusion. (Libet himself left room for veto power: in his view, once we become aware of a decision produced by the brain before we were conscious of it, we have a little time – about one tenth of a second – to veto or cancel it. Many of his followers got off the bus at this point, rejecting veto power as another illusion.)² Some subsequent studies – sometimes using electroencephalograms (EEG), as Libet did, and sometimes other technologies – have been claimed to support the same conclusion (Fried, Mukamel, and Kreiman 2011; Soon et al., 2008). I will not trouble readers with the details of the experiments here. To readers interested in the details, I recommend Mele (2009) for a rigorous discussion, or Mele (2014) for the general reader.

It is time to cut to the chase. I have argued elsewhere (Mele 2009; 2014) that it has not been shown that the participants make unconscious decisions in the experiments at issue, much less that all decisions are made unconsciously; and sometimes the response I receive is that I am skirting the crucial point. The alleged crucial point has two parts: (i) even if the experiments do not show that our decisions are made unconsciously, they do show that decision-making is a brain process; and (ii) anyone who knows what “free will” means knows that free decisions need to issue from processes of another kind – supernatural processes.

Here is a bold example of claim (ii) from neuroscientist P. Read Montague (2008, p. 584):

Free will is the idea that we make choices and have thoughts independent of anything remotely resembling a physical process. Free will is the close cousin to the idea of the soul – the concept that “you,” your thoughts and feelings, derive from an entity that is separate and distinct from the physical mechanisms that make up your body. From this perspective, your choices are not caused by physical events, but instead emerge wholly formed from somewhere indescribable and outside the purview of physical descriptions. This implies that free will cannot have evolved by natural selection, as that would place it directly in a stream of causally connected events.

Another example comes from neurologist C. M. Fisher (2001, pp. 364–365). After describing the threat that he believes Libet’s work poses to free will, he writes:

Somewhat the same conclusion may be reached on the basis of rather elementary observation. Every thought, feeling, inclination, intention, desire ... must be created by nervous system activity. How else could they arise? Ideas would have to arise without a physical basis. Nervous system activity must always precede. ... If one has the experience of “willing” the nervous system to do something, the impression of willing must have been preceded by nervous system activity. Otherwise there would be no source and we are in the realm of the supernatural.

Neuroscientist Michael Gazzaniga (2011, p. 108) is thinking along the same lines when he asserts that free will essentially involves a ghostly or non-physical element and “some secret stuff that is YOU.” Given his conception of free will, it is not surprising that he claims that “free will is a miscast concept, based on social and psychological beliefs ... that have not been borne out and/or are at odds with modern scientific knowledge about the nature of our universe” (Gazzaniga 2011, p. 219). And here is something in the same vein from biologist Anthony Cashmore (2010, p. 4499): “if we no longer entertain the luxury of a belief in the ‘magic of the soul,’ then there is little else to offer in support of the concept of free will.” He adds:

In the absence of any molecular model accommodating the concept of free will, I have to conclude that the dualism of Descartes is alive and well. That is, just like Descartes, we still believe (much as we pretend otherwise) that there is a magic component to human behavior. Here I argue that the way we use the concept of free will is nonsensical. (Cashmore 2010, p. 4503)³

As I mentioned, my own view of what “free will” means is seriously at odds with the ideas I have just quoted. How might I go about trying to persuade people who embrace these ideas to come over to my side – or, at least, much closer to it? Simply asking them on what grounds they conceive of free will as they do is a start. Nothing in the branches of science in which the quoted scientists work gives us evidence about the meaning of the expression “free will,” and they know that. So any answers they give will come from elsewhere. Of course, it is fair for them to ask the same question of me. And, later, I will say something in response.

Another step to take is to gather evidence about how non-specialists conceive of free will. If I were to find out that the overwhelming majority of non-specialists take free will to be supernatural, I might begin to suspect that I have been living in an ivory tower and might reopen for myself the question whether free will is essentially supernatural. Maybe Montague and crew would react similarly were they to find out that the overwhelming majority swings my way. Many years ago, a conversation with a friend revealed his surprising belief that the word “animal” did not apply to tiny animals like ants and mosquitos. A look at a dictionary solved his problem. Hearing from person after person that he was wrong might have worked too. In the case of the present question about free will, a dictionary will not settle the matter. But evidence about how most English speakers use the expression “free will” may prove useful.

There is an interesting body of work in psychology and experimental philosophy on what non-specialists mean by “free will.” Some of this work gets at the present issue. In a study by Andrew Monroe and Bertram Malle, participants responded to the following request: “Please explain in a few lines what you think it means to have free will” (Monroe and Malle 2010, p. 214). The 180 participants were undergraduates at the University of Oregon. Monroe and Malle report that “no assumptions of substance dualism ... were expressed” (2010, p. 216). Substance dualism is a doctrine that includes a commitment to the idea that “associated with each human person, there is a thinking thing ... not composed of the same kinds of stuff as ... non-mental things” (Zimmerman 2006, p. 115; Zimmerman describes the “thinking thing” as a soul, but some substance dualists prefer to use the word “mind”). Related findings are reported by Eddy Nahmias (2011; also see Stillman, Baumeister, and Mele 2011):

a surprisingly low proportion of respondents: (1) *agreed* with the statement “Humans have free will only because they have nonphysical souls” (15–25%); (2) *agreed* with the statement “Our power of free will is something that is not part of our brain” (18%); or *disagreed* with the statement “It is because our minds are the products of our brains that we have free will” (only 13% when the statement followed a description of our brains as complex and unique, and still only 25% when the statement followed a description of the brain as mechanistic, governed by physical laws, and soon to be understood scientifically). (Nahmias 2011, p. 20 n5)

Both studies provide evidence that a majority of non-specialists do *not* take free will to depend on the existence of non-physical souls.

A collection of simple studies I conducted (and first reported in Mele 2012) takes a different tack. Here, I discuss the study of mine in which physicalism was made most salient. In it, I polled a group of 90 Florida State University undergraduates taking a

basic philosophy course that did not deal with free will. The students read the following text: “We’re interested in how you understand free will. Please read the following sentences and answer the questions by circling your answer.” About half then read Story 1 below before they read Story 2, and the others read the stories in the opposite order. Participants were instructed not to change their answer about the story they read first in light of their answer to the other story. The questions were these: “Did John have free will when he made his decision?” and “Is this your first philosophy class after high school?” Participants’ options for answers were “Yes” and “No.”

Story 1: In 2019, scientists finally prove that everything in the universe is physical and that what we refer to as “minds” are actually brains at work. They also show exactly where decisions and intentions are found in the brain and how they are caused. Our decisions are brain processes, and our intentions are brain states. Also, our decisions and intentions are caused by other brain processes.

In 2009, John Jones saw a 20 dollar bill fall from the pocket of the person walking in front of him. He considered returning it to the person, who did not notice the bill fall; but he decided to keep it. Of course, given what scientists later discovered, John’s decision was a brain process and it was caused by other brain processes.

Story 2: In 2019, scientists who work for a secret military organization finally develop a foolproof compliance drug. The drug is used to make people decide to do various things. Whenever they give a person the drug and then suggest a course of action, that person is irresistibly caused to decide to take that course of action. They make their suggestions through a tiny computer chip that they implant in a person’s brain.

These chemists gave the compliance drug to John Jones, a very honest man. When John saw a 20 dollar bill fall from the pocket of the person walking in front of him, they suggested keeping it. John considered returning it to the person, who did not notice the bill fall; but, of course, he decided to keep it. After all, the combination of the compliance drug and the suggestion forced John to decide to keep it.

The results are telling. Almost three-quarters of the participants (73.33%) said that John had free will when he made his decision in Story 1, and only about one fifth (21.11%) said this about John in Story 2.⁵ The strong negative response to Story 2 indicates that the great majority of participants do not take the free-will-no-matter-what perspective.⁶ And Story 1, in which physicalism is very salient, yields a strong “free will” response. In that story, there is no place in the universe for non-physical entities to be at work. These findings are certainly at odds with the claim that ordinary usage of the expression “free will” treats free will as a supernatural power that depends on the existence of immaterial souls. I do not see my polls as foolproof, of course. Even so, they definitely provide better evidence about ordinary usage of “free will” than does, for example, a randomly selected neuroscientist’s opinion about what that expression means.

There is more evidence now about how prominent a place the supernatural has in ordinary thinking about free will than there was when I conducted my studies. Thomas Nadelhoffer (2014, p. 212) reports on a survey study with 330 “general population” participants. The participants were, on average, “older, more conservative, and more

religious” than the undergraduates who usually participate in such studies (Nadelhoffer 2014, p. 212). A majority of them reported a belief in the existence of souls. But, of course, it cannot properly be inferred from this that a majority of them conceive of free will in such a way that its existence depends on the existence of souls. Fortunately (for my purposes, at any rate), the participants were probed on this very issue. They were asked to respond to the following statement: “If it turned out that people lacked non-physical (or immaterial) souls, then they would lack free will” (Nadelhoffer 2014, p. 213). The results were interesting: “36% disagree; 32% neither agree nor disagree; and 30% agree” (Nadelhoffer 2014, p. 213).

Only 30% of these people agree with the scientists who claim that having free will depends on having a soul. I find that encouraging. Even so, the differences in results in the studies I have mentioned merit attention. When Monroe and Malle ask their open-ended question about free will, no one says that having free will depends on having a soul; when Nadelhoffer explicitly asks about the dependence of free will on souls, 30% say it does and 36% say it does not; and when people respond to my vignette about a wholly physical agent in a wholly physical universe, 73% say that he has free will.

How may these differences be accounted for? Differences in the subject pools are probably part of the answer. But I doubt the whole story is to be found there. Nadelhoffer (2014) distinguishes between theories and intuitions. I draw a related distinction between theories and concepts, where concepts are understood as sorting mechanisms (Mele 2001). On this conception of concepts, your concept of *car*, for example, is a mechanism for sorting things into cars and non-cars. In my view, a good way to get evidence about people’s concepts (understood as sorting mechanisms) in the domain of action is to present them with brief stories in which agents perform specific actions – including making certain decisions – and see how they sort things. A straightforward way to get at people’s theories is to ask them theoretical questions. The questions may be open-ended: What does it mean to have free will? Or they may be more specific: Is it true that if we don’t have souls, then we don’t have free will? If people’s concepts of *X* are sometimes out of line with their theories about *X* (see Mele 2001), how they sort things in stories will not always line up with their theoretical pronouncements.

The difference between Nadelhoffer’s results on the dependence question and the results I reported from Monroe and Malle’s (2010) study is striking. When participants in a study are asked to say what it means to have free will, they are likely to report the first ideas that come to mind and strike them as reasonable. If they proceed that way, then, in Monroe and Malle’s respondents, having a soul does not leap quickly to mind as a requirement for having free will. However, Nadelhoffer’s question highlights souls. Even if many of the respondents had never thought about free will in connection with souls, the question prompted them to entertain the idea; and even if souls would not have come to mind if the respondents had been asked simply to say what it means to have free will, the idea that souls are required for free will seemed credible to 30% of them, once they were presented with it. Now Nadelhoffer’s participant pool was probably significantly more religious than Monroe and Malle’s. So if the latter group had been presented with Nadelhoffer’s query rather than Monroe and Malle’s request, we might expect a lower percentage to endorse the idea that having free will depends on having a soul; but the figure might still be substantial.

Whatever future work turns up on the differences I have been discussing, it should be noted that Nadelhoffer's finding on the dependence issue supports my claim that scientists who assert that having free will depends on having non-physical souls are taking a minority view about what "free will" means. Again, only 30% agreed with this. And this is so even though a majority expressed a belief in the existence of souls.

A comment on the sociology of philosophy is appropriate here. A survey of 931 philosophers on 30 philosophical topics (Bourget and Chalmers 2014) yielded some data on free will. When the "accept" and "lean toward" responses are combined, the responses to the free will query break down as follows: "compatibilism 59.1%, libertarianism 13.7%, no free will 12.2%, other 14.9%" (p. 476). Now, believing that compatibilism is true does not commit one to believing in free will. One might think that although free will is compatible with determinism, there is good reason to believe free will does not exist. But, in practice, compatibilists advocate a pro-free-will position. When we add in the other pro-free-will position, libertarianism, we get a pro-free-will response of about 73%.⁷ So, then, do most of the philosophers surveyed believe in a divine being or beings? No. Here is the breakdown: atheism 72.8%, theism 14.6%, other 12.6% (p. 476)). And, of course, it is a rare atheist who believes in immaterial souls. So we have evidence that the majority of philosophers – like the majority of non-specialists – do not agree with those scientists who claim that free will depends on souls.

I said I would explain something about why I conceive of free will as I do. Often, an attempt to get a good grip on a concept benefits from an effort to fit it into a web of associated concepts. In ordinary thought, free will is closely associated with moral responsibility. In light of a wealth of evidence from experimental philosophy, it is wholly unsurprising that when Nadelhoffer (2014) substituted "moral responsibility" for "free will" in the statement I discussed, his results were very similar ("38% disagree; 28% neither agree nor disagree; 35% agree," p. 213). And if you were to ask the participants in the study of mine that I described whether John is morally responsible for the decision he made in Story 1 or for keeping the money in that story (or questions about moral blame designed to get at moral responsibility for these things), you would probably find the percentage of *yes* answers to be about the same as for my question about free will.⁸ Free will and moral responsibility are closely connected in philosophical work as well. A common claim in the philosophical literature on these topics is that a being who never has free will is not morally responsible for anything (though there are dissenters, of course).⁹

Thinking about free will in connection with moral responsibility can bring some people down to earth. It is interesting in this connection that although Gazzaniga (2011) rejects free will as magical and contrary to science, he takes a very different view of moral responsibility and accountability. "There is no scientific reason not to hold people accountable and responsible," he writes (p. 106). Someone might say that it is a good idea to hold people responsible even if they are not, in fact, responsible, but Gazzaniga is not advocating that idea. Evidently, he sets a much lower bar for responsibility than for free will – one that does not require anything supernatural. But, as I have already indicated, he has no neuroscientific grounds for setting the bar for free will where he does. Nothing that comes from neuroscience prevents him from lowering his bar for free will to bring it into line with his naturalistic bar for moral responsibility. If he were to do that, he might start saying that there is no scientific reason to believe that free will is an illusion!

I conceive of free will as I do partly because I regard having free will – that is, an ability to act freely – as a necessary condition for being a morally responsible agent (Mele 2006), and I see no good reason to think that moral responsibility depends on the supernatural.¹⁰ Of course, this opens another can of worms. After all, there are people who contend that morality needs a supernatural foundation. Pursuing this issue would take me far afield.

Parting Remarks

Readers occasionally make faulty inferences about an author's beliefs from the proportion of space the author devotes to a subtopic in a given article. I should do something to forestall such inferences here. Because the topic on which I agreed to write is free will and atheism, I have paid much more attention to the supernatural than I normally do when writing about free will. As I mentioned, I do not see the existence of free will as dependent on the existence of supernatural entities. In the past, I have written about the supernatural in connection with free will only in response to the claim that my work on free will and neuroscience skirts the idea that, as I put it earlier, anyone who knows what “free will” means knows that free decisions need to issue from supernatural processes. And I wanted to stay on ground that is familiar to me; I have no expertise in religion or theology. The reason why survey-style experimental philosophy figures prominently in my discussion of this issue is that I believe this is the best approach to take to make headway with neuroscientists who insist that free will is supernatural. As I have observed, they know that their work in neuroscience does not give them any special insight into what the expression “free will” means, and data on how non-specialists use that expression are relevant to its meaning. Do I believe that survey-style experimental philosophy can settle such questions as whether free will is compatible with determinism or whether free will exists? No. But it is useful in the present context.

In the sociological study of philosophers that I mentioned, libertarianism was positively correlated with each of the following: theism, non-physicalism, and non-naturalism (Bourget and Chalmers 2014, p. 479). People who are attracted to either libertarianism or theism tend to be attracted to the other as well. Elsewhere, I have argued against the idea that event-causal libertarianism is an uninhabitable halfway house between compatibilism and agent-causal libertarianism (Mele 2013b). The idea is that if, as incompatibilists insist, no proposed compatibilist set of sufficient conditions for free will is acceptable, mixing in indeterministic event causation, no matter how that is done, cannot carry one over the bar for free will and, to get there, we need agent causation (which does not have to be supernatural). A related and even bolder idea is that any naturalistic libertarian view, whether event-causal, agent-causal, or non-causal, is an uninhabitable halfway house between compatibilism and a view of free will according to which it depends on something supernatural. When arguments for that idea are presented, they can be assessed. Like Kane (1996), I believe that the most promising libertarian account of free will is event-causal and wholly devoid of commitments to either theism or substance dualism. I lack the space to defend that belief here. Interested readers will find support for it in Mele (2017).

Acknowledgments

This article was made possible through the support of a grant from the John Templeton Foundation. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the John Templeton Foundation.

Notes

- 1 Ginet (2007, p. 254) contends that, necessarily, no action performed by an agent was up to the agent unless it was uncaused. When this contention is combined with the proposition that, necessarily, an action is directly free only if it was up to its agent, the result is that only uncaused actions can be directly free.
- 2 On veto power, see Libet (1985; 1999; 2004, pp. 137–149). For discussion of neuroscientific work on the vetoing, including Libet's, see Mele (2009, pp. 51–61, 69–86).
- 3 Cashmore (2010) offers an argument of sorts for believing that free will depends on substance dualism. For discussion of it, see Mele (2013a).
- 5 Of the participants who saw Story 1 first ($N = 43$), 79.07% answered yes to the question about that story, and 25.58% answered yes to the question about Story 2. The figures for those who saw the stories in the reverse order were 68.09% vs. 17.02%. The figures for students who were taking their first philosophy course ($N = 53$) and those who were not ($N = 37$) were very similar: grand averages for yes answers were 71.70% vs. 22.64% for the first-time students and 75.68% vs. 18.92% for the others.
- 6 On this perspective, see Feltz, Cokely, and Nadelhoffer (2009: 16–19).
- 7 In principle, some people who fall under “other” may also have a pro-free-will view. For example, it is possible to be agnostic about the dispute between compatibilists and incompatibilists, not lean in either direction, and believe in free will.
- 8 In a similar study of mine in which physicalism was not as fully emphasized, I asked whether John had free will at the time and whether he deserved to be blamed for what he did. About 90% (89.85%) of the participants answered *yes* to the question about free will and about 87% (86.95%) answered *yes* to the question about deserved blame. (See Mele 2012, p. 429.)
- 9 Ted Warfield (2003, p. 621) has floated the idea that even if moral responsibility is compatible with determinism, free will is not. If moral responsibility is compatible with determinism and free will is not, then free will is not required for moral responsibility: there can be morally responsible agents in deterministic worlds in which there is no free will. It is sometimes said that John Fischer holds the view just mentioned – that his semi-compatibilism is compatibilism about moral responsibility and incompatibilism about free will. This misrepresents Fischer's position. He describes his semi-compatibilism as the view that “moral responsibility is compatible with causal determinism, even if causal determinism is incompatible with freedom to do otherwise” (1994, p. 180). Fischer's semi-compatibilism also is a view about free action. He asserts that “guidance control is the freedom-relevant condition necessary and sufficient for moral responsibility” (1994, p. 168), and he reports that his “account of guidance control (and moral responsibility) ... yields “semi-compatibilism” “(1994, p. 180). Thus, I take semi-compatibilism to encompass the thesis that free action is compatible with determinism (as traditional compatibilists assert), even if “determinism is incompatible with freedom to do otherwise” (which traditional compatibilists deny). Someone who believes that free will is the ability to act freely or that having free will does not depend on having the freedom to do otherwise may contend that free will is compatible with determinism even if “determinism is incompatible with freedom to do otherwise.” In any case, Fischer identifies

“acting freely” with “exercising guidance control” (2006, p. 21), and, in his view, guidance control can be exercised in deterministic worlds.

- 10 This is not to say that I believe that every action for which an agent is morally responsible is a free action. A drunk driver who accidentally mows down a pedestrian may be morally responsible for doing that even though he does not do it freely.

References

- Bourget, D., and Chalmers, D. (2014) “What do philosophers believe?” *Philosophical Studies* 170: 465–500.
- Cashmore, A. (2010) “The Lucretian swerve: The biological basis of human behavior and the criminal justice system.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 107: 4499–5004.
- Chisholm, R. (1966) “Freedom and action,” in K. Lehrer (ed.) *Freedom and Determinism*. New York: Random House.
- Clarke, R. (2003) *Libertarian Accounts of Free Will*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Feltz, A., Cokely, E., and Nadelhoffer, T. (2009) “Natural compatibilism versus natural incompatibilism: Back to the drawing board.” *Mind and Language* 24: 1–23.
- Fischer, J. (1994) *The Metaphysics of Free Will*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Fischer, J. (2006) *My Way: Essays on Moral Responsibility*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fisher, C. M. (2001) “If there were no free will.” *Medical Hypotheses* 56: 364–366.
- Fried, I., Mukamel, R., and Kreiman, G. (2011) “Internally generated pre-activation of single neurons in human medial frontal cortex predicts volition.” *Neuron* 69: 548–562.
- Gazzaniga, M. (2011) *Who’s in Charge? Free Will and the Science of the Brain*. New York: Ecco.
- Ginet, C. (2007) “An action can be both uncaused and up to the agent,” in C. Lumer and S. Nannini (eds.) *Intentionality, Deliberation, and Autonomy*. Burlington: Ashgate, 243–255.
- Goetz, S. (2008) *Freedom, Teleology, and Evil*. New York: Continuum.
- Kane, R. (1996) *The Significance of Free Will*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Libet, B. (1985) “Unconscious cerebral initiative and the role of conscious will in voluntary action.” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 8: 529–566.
- Libet, B. (1999) “Do we have free will?” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 6: 47–57.
- Libet, B. (2004) *Mind Time*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Libet, B., Wright, E., and Gleason, C. (1982) “Readiness potentials preceding unrestricted ‘spontaneous’ vs. pre-planned voluntary acts.” *Electroencephalography and Clinical Neurophysiology* 54: 322–335.
- Mele, A. (2001) “Acting intentionally: Probing folk notions,” in B. Malle, L. Moses, and D. Baldwin (eds.) *Intentions and Intentionality: Foundations of Social Cognition*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 27–43.
- Mele, A. (2003) *Motivation and Agency*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mele, A. (2006) *Free Will and Luck*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mele, A. (2009) *Effective Intentions: The Power of Conscious Will*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mele, A. (2012) “Another scientific threat to free will?” *Monist* 95: 422–440.
- Mele, A. (2013a) “Free will, science, and punishment,” in T. Nadelhoffer (ed.) *The Future of Punishment*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 177–191.
- Mele, A. (2013b) “Libertarianism and human agency.” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 87: 72–92.
- Mele, A. (2014) *Free: Why Science Hasn’t Disproved Free Will*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Mele, A. (2017) *Aspects of Agency*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Monroe, A. and Malle, B. (2010) "From uncaused will to conscious choice: The need to study, not speculate about people's folk concept of free will." *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 1: 211–224.
- Montague, P. Read (2008) "Free will." *Current Biology* 18: R584–385.
- Nadelhoffer, T. (2014) "Dualism, libertarianism, and scientific scepticism about free will," in W. Sinnott-Armstrong (ed.) *Moral Psychology: Neuroscience, Free Will, and Responsibility*, Vol. 4, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 209–216.
- O'Connor, T. (2000) *Persons and Causes*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Soon, C., Brass, M. Heinze, H. and Haynes, J. (2008) "Unconscious determinants of free decisions in the human brain." *Nature Neuroscience* 11: 543–545.
- Stillman, T., Baumeister, R., and Mele, A. (2011) "Free will in everyday life: Autobiographical accounts of free and unfree actions." *Philosophical Psychology* 24: 381–394.
- Taylor, R. (1966) *Action and Purpose*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Warfield, T. (2003) "Compatibilism and incompatibilism: Some arguments," in M. Loux and D. Zimmerman (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 613–630.
- Zimmerman, D. (2006) "Dualism in the philosophy of mind," in D. Borchert (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2nd edn, Vol. 3. Detroit: Thomson Gale, pp. 113–122.

Supernatural

BERIT BROGAARD

There exists a plethora of definitions of atheism. Some are so comprehensive that even agnosticism falls under the category of atheism. As J. J. C. Smart (2016) argues, the main reason for the lack of a single precise definition of atheism is that atheism is a family resemblance word in Wittgenstein's sense (Wittgenstein 1953; cf. Rosch 1977). What this means is that the notion defies precise analysis. There are prototypes of atheism – our best examples of it – and then there are all the example of atheism that are either fairly good (e.g., a disbelief in a first mover) or somewhat questionable (e.g., a disbelief in panpsychism or a disbelief in Plato's immortal forms).

Following Smart, however, I shall here define atheism straightforwardly as “the negation of theism, the denial of the existence of God.” “God” here should be understood as the central notion of a sophisticated form of monotheism, thus excluding the polytheisms of our past (e.g., Roman, Greek, and Norse mythology). Theism implies that there is a supernatural being (whether it is a personified being, a first mover, or an almighty ruler of the universe).

One common major motivation for atheistic belief is a prior disbelief in anything supernatural. But what does it mean for something to be supernatural? Here I will argue that there are two forms of supernaturalism: strong and weak. Weak supernaturalism denies that everything can be deduced, in principle, from truths about physical entities at the lowest level of organization. Strong supernaturalism, by contrast, denies that only physical properties can be causally efficacious. As strong supernaturalism states that there can be supernatural entities that can causally influence the spatiotemporal world, it *a fortiori* implies that there can be supernatural or non-physically grounded entities. So, strong supernaturalism entails weak supernaturalism. But the weak view does not entail the strong, because:

1. The supernatural entities posited by weak supernaturalism need not be causally efficacious; and

2. The existence of non-standard physical entities that are causally efficacious could, in principle, be deduced from truths about physical entities at the lowest level of organization.

Consider the following scenario: there exist five fundamental forces, four of which are exclusively physical and one of which only has physical properties but a non-standard neutral inner essence.¹ This latter fact is presumably a fact about physical entities at the lowest level of organization. But it entails that one force is not physical in a standard sense.

As we will see, both weak and strong supernaturalism have some credibility. Weak supernaturalism is in fact fairly uncontroversial. If one is a type B physicalist who holds that the mental supervenes on the physical (Chalmers 2006; 2009), but one denies that the mental can be deduced from the physical (even under optimal conditions), then one is a weak supernaturalist. As we will see, if strong supernaturalism is false, then so is theism. So, the two most important questions for our purposes here are:

1. Is strong supernaturalism true?
2. Does denying strong supernaturalism suffice as a foundation for atheistic belief?

I will argue that strong supernaturalism has some credibility. In fact, there is reason to think that the existence of supernatural entities with causal powers is inevitable. Truth, for example, is very likely a supernatural phenomenon that is causally efficacious rather than epiphenomenal. Or so I will argue. But even if one were to reject strong supernaturalism about truth (and other elusive properties, such as moral and modal properties), this does not by itself provide a good foundation for atheism. To justify atheistic belief, one would need an argument specifically directed against the existence of the supernatural (or semi-natural) entities depicted by the word “God” in the various monotheistic religions.²

Naturalism and Supernaturalism

In order to understand what the supernatural is more specifically, I shall begin with a discussion of naturalism. It is fairly common in philosophy to distinguish between two forms of naturalism: methodological and ontological (Devitt 1994; Loewer 1997; Papineau 2009). Within philosophy, methodological naturalism is a view about philosophical practice. It states that philosophy and science are pursuing the same ends and should use similar methods to reach those ends. If the aim of science is to increase our collective reservoir of *a posteriori* knowledge by testing theories against the empirical data, then according to methodological naturalism, this is also the aim of philosophy. I will have nothing to say about the plausibility of methodological naturalism in this chapter.

In contrast with methodological naturalism, ontological naturalism concerns not philosophical practice but what there is (Brogaard 2016). It will be helpful to distinguish between two forms of ontological naturalism. I shall take naturalism, in its strongest form, to be the view that all truths (that is, truth bearers, such as propositions

and sentences, that have *the property of being true*) can be deduced, at least in principle, from truths about natural entities on the lowest level of organization, for example, truths about the elementary particles and forces of the universe.³ So, a conjunction of all truths about the elementary particles and forces, including the laws of nature, would *a priori* entail all truths. I define naturalism, in a weaker form, as the view that the only entities that can be causally efficacious are physical entities. This view is also sometimes captured as the idea that the physical realm is causally closed, that is, all physical effects can be explained by microphysical phenomena and fundamental microphysical laws. Call these two views *strong and weak ontological naturalism* respectively:

Strong ontological naturalism: All truths can be deduced, at least in principle, from truths about physical entities at the lowest level of organization.

Weak ontological naturalism: Only physical properties can be causally efficacious.

As strong ontological naturalism rules out that there can be any truly supernatural or non-physical entities, it *a fortiori* rules out that there can be supernatural entities that can causally influence the spatiotemporal world. So, strong ontological naturalism entails weak ontological naturalism. But the weak view does not entail the strong. Unlike the strong view, the weak view is compatible with the existence of supernatural and non-physical entities, such as ghosts, angels, and golden mountains, as long as these supernatural and non-physical entities cannot causally influence the world. However, since physically verifying the existence of these entities would require that they are causally efficacious, for example by emitting radiation that can be physically measured, weak ontological naturalism rules out that we could ever physically verify the existence of such entities.

I do not rule out the possibility of a moderate version of ontological naturalism that formulates naturalism in terms of metaphysical entailment rather than deducibility. For example, some physicalists deny strong ontological naturalism, as I have formulated it, but would hold that truths about the microphysical realm metaphysically entail all truths (or at least all truths about the physical and the mental: e.g., Levine 1983; Tye 1995; Lycan 1996; Hill 1997; Block and Stalnaker 1999). This view is sometimes cashed out as the supervenience claim that the mental supervenes on the physical. If the mental supervenes on the physical, any changes in mental properties must be accompanied by corresponding changes in physical properties. I will not discuss this more moderate form of ontological naturalism here, as none of the main accounts of the supernatural is a candidate to be a theory that is metaphysically entailed by, but cannot be deduced from, physical theories.

I should add that there are also theorists who argue that property dualism is compatible with strong naturalism, because they take mental properties to be natural properties governed by natural psychophysical laws (e.g., Chalmers 1996). We could easily accommodate this type of view by substituting “natural” for “physical” in the formulation of strong ontological naturalism above. However, in my opinion, it is ill-advised to attempt to argue for a broader definition of “natural” within the limits of a short chapter. If there are indeed primitive mental properties, then they may well turn out to be natural properties. But it does not follow from such a concession that all primitive properties should be counted as natural properties. If that were the case, then naturalism might quickly become a rather trivial position, as any entity that is not

reducible to physical properties and that seems to have some claim to existence might then be rendered a natural property. As I don't know how to avoid trivialization, given a broader formulation of naturalism, I shall here assume that naturalism requires deducibility from the microphysical arena.

Strong ontological naturalism is a fairly controversial view both among philosophers and scientists. Thinkers who believe that there are strongly emergent properties, for example, will deny that all truths are deducible even in principle from truths about elementary particles and forces. Weak ontological naturalism is more widely accepted, though it is by no means close to universally accepted, even among scientists. Some consciousness researchers, for example, believe that consciousness is a fundamental non-physical property that nonetheless may be causally efficacious (Koch 2012).

Having made these remarks, we can now turn to supernaturalism. Since supernaturalism is a denial of naturalism, we can define two kinds of supernaturalism corresponding to the two kinds of naturalism as follows:

Strong supernaturalism: Non-physical properties can be causally efficacious.

Weak supernaturalism: Not all truths can be deduced, not even in principle, from truths about physical entities at the lowest level of organization.

As strong supernaturalism states that there can be supernatural entities that can causally influence the spatiotemporal world, it *a fortiori* implies that there can be supernatural or non-physically grounded entities. So, strong supernaturalism entails weak supernaturalism. But the weak view does not entail the strong, as the supernatural entities permitted by weak supernaturalism needn't be causally efficacious.

Weak Naturalism and Atheism

As noted above, weak naturalism is consistent with the existence of supernatural entities, such as ghosts, witches, and a personified God with thoughts and feelings but without causal efficacy. Weak naturalism, however, is not consistent with there being a first mover or an almighty ruler or even a God who can observe us. The reason for this is that a first mover and an almighty or observant ruler have causal powers, despite allegedly being supernatural.

Granted, we could imagine God having physical properties, allowing him to use his physical properties to influence the world either at its beginning or continuously as it unfolds. At first glance, it may seem likely that he does have physical properties, allowing him to causally influence or alter the physical world. In the Old Testament, God communicates with his people by revealing his voice, he separates waters to allow for people to cross it without a boat or ship, and he kills people who disobey him or punishes them in other ways. In the New Testament, God takes occupancy in a human body, He is a man by the name of "Jesus." While being Jesus God is also Jesus's father *and* the Holy Spirit that impregnated virgin Maria. While he is embodied in the body of Jesus, God heals people, he walks on top of the ocean and he turns water into wine, using methods that are inconsistent with the laws of physics but not with the laws of metaphysics.

For instance, it is metaphysically possible for Jesus to exchange wine for water so quickly that it would be physically impossible for people to see it. This would be a type of real magic, a kind of magic Holy Spirit could also have used when impregnating virgin Maria. Likewise, it is metaphysically possible for God to harden the surface of the ocean sufficiently to allow human Jesus to walk on it. He could use a type of ice that looks just like liquid water and that does not melt at 70 degrees Fahrenheit.

If weak ontological naturalism is true, however, and strong supernaturalism therefore is also true, then it does not suffice for theism that it is metaphysically possible for supernatural entities to have the power to change the world, using magic and physically impossible substances. If strong supernaturalism is true, then only physical properties can be causally efficacious. God would therefore need to bear physical properties and his actions would need to be consistent with the laws of physics. But the God of Christianity, for instance, does not possess physical properties except when he is embodied in the shape of Jesus. In fact, He affects the world in ways that disobey the laws of physics (e.g., observing everyone at the same time). So, this type of theism entails a rejection of weak ontological naturalism and hence an endorsement of strong supernaturalism. Since strong supernaturalism entails a rejection of weak ontological naturalism, the plausibility of this type of theism stands and falls with the soundness of strong supernaturalism, which is not to say that strong supernaturalism entails theism but only that if strong supernaturalism is false, then so is theism in its most standard forms. In the next section, I will provide some reasons for thinking that strong supernaturalism is true.

Why Strong Supernaturalism Is True

Weak ontological naturalism seems questionable for a number of reasons, which gives us compelling reason to accept strong supernaturalism. Let us focus here on the notion of truth in order to illustrate why weak ontological naturalism is questionable. The property of being true is a property of truth-bearers (i.e., the contents of mental states, propositions, and sentences).

Weak ontological naturalism holds that only physical properties are causally efficacious. So, if truth is not causally efficacious, weak ontological naturalism can be correct even if truth is not a physical property. So, one pertinent question to ask is whether truth is causally efficacious.

It is widely held that truth has certain normative properties, such as being the aim of belief and assertion and the end of inquiry (Peirce 1992; Dummett 1959; Lynch 2009). For example, Michael Dummett (e.g., 1959) held that a person who is rationally asserting something is motivated by the aim of saying something true. Charles Sanders Peirce argued that the most important effect of truth is that it will be revealed by scientific inquiry at some future progressed state of science. As he puts it, “the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth” (Peirce 1992, p. 139).

There is good reason, however, to think that even if truth is normative in either of these senses, it is not normative in the strong sense of being causally efficacious. Consider first the hypothesis that truth is central to our assessment of belief. Truth may be central to our assessment of belief insofar as we predicate it of belief, but truth does

not appear to guide our assessment of belief. If you say that you believe that it's raining, and I look out the window and see no water coming down from the sky, I might say that your belief is false. However, what guides my assessment of your belief is not truth but evidence (i.e., my failing to see water coming down from the sky). My perceptual experience provides *prima facie* justification for my belief that it is not raining, and it is on the basis of this belief that I judge that your belief is false. Although I predicate truth, or the lack thereof, of your belief, it is not truth that causes me to make this assessment. What gives rise to my assessment is my perceptual experience and the belief in which it results.

Consider next the hypothesis that truth is the aim of scientific inquiry. It is certainly true that most scientists (and philosophers) will tell us that they hope to find the truth. But the property of being true does not causally influence the progress of science or scientific practice. Consider the ancient scientific question of whether the universe has always existed or came into existence at some point in the past. Astronomer Edwin Hubble eventually found a way to answer this question. He knew that light that is emitted from an object that is moving away from an observer appears redder than the light of an object that is not moving away. (This is also known as "redshift.") By observing distant galaxies Hubble found that the redshift of distant galaxies increased as a linear function of their distance. So, he concluded that the universe was expanding. From this, physicists inferred that the universe must have been smaller in the past and therefore must not always have been in existence, or at least has not always have existed as it does today. The truth-properties of the truths that the scientists discovered (assuming that they are true) did not cause scientific progress or practice. What caused the progress and practice were (i) a question ("Has the universe always existed?"); (ii) a hypothesis about distance and light ("Light emitted from objects that move away from the observer is redshifted"); (iii) observations of light emitted from distant galaxies ("The redshift of distant galaxies increase as a linear function of their distance"); and (iv) inferences to the best explanation. Truth itself played no role in reaching any of these answers.

Truth may be what we are searching for, it may be what we are aiming at or hoping to reach, but it does not appear to play a causal role in forming beliefs or in guiding scientific progress or practice in the actual world. It may be thought that these considerations presuppose particular "conservative" or "conventional" theories of truth, and that truth perhaps can be understood to play a causal role in forming beliefs or in guiding scientific progress or practice given a more radical theory of truth, for example, radical pragmatism. Radical pragmatists, however, deny that truth is a substantial property and adamantly deny that it can have any normative effect on our ordinary or scientific practices (see Brogaard 2016 for a review).

Could truth be causally efficacious in a different way? It is sometimes thought that causally inefficacious properties are strange, because it seems that properties must be causally efficacious in order for us to have knowledge of them. Suppose, for example, that there are causally inefficacious ghosts. Since it appears that we come to have knowledge of things as a result of these things leaving a causal mark on our cognitive system, it would seem that we could not come to have any knowledge of ghosts that cannot causally affect us. Since it is arguable that we do have some knowledge about truth, and since knowledge about a property appears to require that the property is causally efficacious, it may be thought that truth must be causally efficacious. It might be argued, however, that truth is different from causally inefficacious ghosts

in this regard. A widely accepted platitude about truth is that it obeys Convention T, or the T schema, which can be expressed as follows:

Convention T: ‘ ϕ ’ is true if and only if ϕ

If truth obeys Convention T, then we can come to have knowledge of truth by inference. Let it be granted for argument’s sake that some of our beliefs count as knowledge. Let’s say that I know that I am human. From “I am human” it follows, by Convention T, that it is true that I am human. From this it follows by, existential generalization, that something is true. By property (or lambda) abstraction, it follows that there is a property of truth. If I have the right sorts of logic skills, I can come to know there is a truth property. But there is nothing in this process that requires the truth property itself to be causally efficacious, which is to say, the truth property itself need not have any causal influences on my cognitive system in order for me to come to have this knowledge.

If truth is causally inefficacious, then the nature of truth (whatever it is) does not counter weak ontological naturalism. Recall that weak ontological naturalism, as we defined it, is the view that only physical entities can be causally efficacious. If truth is not causally efficacious, which it probably is not, then weak ontological naturalism can be true even if truth turns out to be a non-natural property. In that case, weak ontological naturalism about truth is correct (but trivially so).

There are, however, other ways in which the notion of truth could be causally efficacious. If I intend to drink the substance in front of me on the basis of my desire to drink water, I believe that the substance in front of me is water and I reach to and grasp the substance and put it in my mouth, then my fulfillment of my intention and hence the success of my action depends on the truth of the two contents *Brit drinks water* and *the substance in front of Brit is water*. If the substance in front of me is poison rather than water, then I cannot carry out my intention. My intention is then thwarted, and my action does not fulfill my intention. The property of truth thus has causal powers insofar as it can cause me to drink the water in front of me in a fulfillment of my intention. The property of being true, in the case we have envisaged, causally determines whether or not my action fulfils my intention.

Against this case, it may be argued that this is not a genuine case of causal influence but rather one of ontological dependency. My action partially depends on the truth of my belief. It is not caused by the truth of my belief.

This may be right. But there are other examples in the vicinity that seem to invoke the notion of causal efficacy. Suppose there are two substances in front of me, and that I am very thirsty – so thirsty that my tongue feels like it is glued to my palatal. Eager to satisfy my thirst, I listen carefully as I am told that one of the two substances in front of me is water, whereas the other is a deadly poison. A and B look, sound, feel, smell, and taste exactly like water. Only a complicated chemical analysis can reveal the difference in chemical structure. Now consider the following two sentences:

(1a) “Substance A is water” is true.

(1b) “Substance B is water” is true.

If I am not provided with information about the truth or falsity of (1a) and (1b), then there is a 50% chance that I will die, should I decide to try to satisfy my thirst. It is

hardcore Russian roulette. If, on the other hand, I obtain absolute certainty from an all-knowing oracle (or the scientists behind the experiment) that (1a) is true, whereas (1b) is false, then I can safely choose to drink substance A and thereby satisfy my thirst without having to undergo a slow, painful death. In this case, it seems that “Brit knows that ‘substance A is water’ is true,” which—owing to the factivity of “knowledge”—entails (1a), will be the main cause of my choice to drink substance A rather than substance B. The same point, of course, could have been made by appealing to facts (the fact that substance A is water, and the fact that substance B is water) but to the extent that facts just are true propositions (Mulligan & Correia 2013), this way of cashing out the example does not make any interesting difference to the main lesson of the example.

But isn’t my justified belief that (1a) is true what really drives my behavior? I don’t think so. We often act on justified belief. We cannot normally tell whether something is true or false. We often can only make informed judgments about the truth-value of propositions on the basis of evidence. In this case, however, the option of not drinking anything at all is available. Despite being very thirsty, not drinking anything won’t kill me. So, if I do choose to drink either substance A or substance B, then I will need absolute (objective) certainty of the kind that only an oracle (or scientist) could provide. But this level of objective certainty is not something we have merely on the basis of justified belief. So, in this case, it would seem that knowledge of the truth of A is at least a partial cause of my action, and since knowledge entails truth, the truth of A itself is also a partial cause of my action—not in isolation from my knowledge of it but as a factor that need to be present as a prerequisite for me having the knowledge.

But—an opponent may ask—if truth can be causally efficacious, at least in a limited sense, is truth then a supernatural property after all? Is naturalism about truth false? This is not the place to outline a full answer to these questions. As I have argued on a previous occasion (Brogaard 2016), however, the only theories of truth that appear to be compatible with strong ontological naturalism are deflationary theories of truth but, as I argued on that same occasion, deflationary theories are unlikely to be attractive to folks with strong naturalist inclinations.

Here is the gist of the argument against truth being a natural property. Probably the most widely accepted view of truth is a form of the correspondence theory, which takes truth to be a correspondence between a sentence or proposition and a fact (Russell 1956; Wittgenstein 1961). A naturalistic version of the correspondence theory faces well-known challenges. One is that it is not clear how correspondence works for normative, modal, and mathematical claims, such as “murder is wrong,” “someone else could have written this chapter,” and “ $2 + 2 = 4$.” Even if “2” and “4” denote entities, they probably do not denote causally efficacious entities. So, it would seem that the correspondence theory cannot be formulated in naturalistic terms. This, however, is not a problem specifically related to the correspondence theory of truth but a more general problem for naturalism. A range of modal or quasi-modal notions beside *truth*, for example—*causality*, *disposition*, and *law*—figure in fundamental physical theories, and therefore ought to be treated as naturalistic. The same may apply to mathematical notions.

Advocates of deflationary theories of truth are in the best position to embrace naturalism about the notion of truth. Deflationists hold that the meaning of “true” is fully explained by the T schema and an account of the function of “true” as a predicate

that primarily serves as a device for generalization and abbreviating conjunctions and disjunctions (Horwich 1990; Field 1994).

But according to exponents of deflationism, there is no substantial truth property in the world. We might compare the truth predicate “true” to the connective expression “or.” Because “or” is an expression denoting a truth-functional connector, its meaning is given by its truth-conditions: “ p or q ” is true just when “ p ” is true, “ q ” is true, or both “ p ” and “ q ” are true. But, arguably, “or” does not denote any language-external properties. Likewise, advocates of deflationism will say that “true” does not refer to anything outside of language itself.

As “true” does not express a substantial property, on the deflationary account, deflationism is perfectly compatible with both weak and strong ontological naturalism. A deflationary theory of truth is no more of an objection to naturalism than a conventional account of disjunction or existential quantification.

The question remains, however, whether naturalists can ultimately accept a deflationary notion of truth. A common objection to deflationism is that the theory cannot explain the correspondence intuition that sentences are true in virtue of certain things obtaining in the world (Stoljar and Damnjanovic 2010). I don’t think this objection has much bite if deflationism is considered in isolation of other views, as it is clear that advocates of deflationism – *qua* denying correspondence theories of truth – are not giving full credit to this intuition. They may not have it at all.

Simply denying that theories of truth must conform to this intuition becomes less plausible, however, when deflationism is combined with strong naturalism. Those who find strong naturalism plausible will typically hold that there is some discourse that contains predicates that express natural properties, and that those natural properties exhaustively characterize what is expressed by those predicates (Dowell 2004). It follows naturally from this idea that to say that “ x is N ” (where “ N ” expresses a natural property) is true is to say something substantial – that “ x is N ” is true in virtue of x instantiating N . This suggests that while deflationism is not at odds with naturalism, as we formulated deflationism above, a deflationist truth property is too thin to satisfy the naturalist’s aspirations. For example, if the strong naturalist says that charm, spin, or charge are natural properties, this claim is insubstantial, as it doesn’t correspond to anything.

It seems that that we are facing a dilemma. If we wish to maintain naturalism, we must be deflationists about truth. But deflationism about truth turns out not to grant some of the basic tenets of and motivations for naturalism. This provides at least some motivation for thinking that the truth property is not a natural property. But if it is not a natural property, and it can be causally efficacious at least in a limited sense, then that is all it takes for strong supernaturalism to be true.

Atheistic Belief and the Rejection of Beliefs in the Supernatural

It is quite straightforward to see how an acceptance of either weak or strong naturalism could cause atheistic belief. Since theism posits the existence of a supernatural non-physical being who is all-powerful and hence is causally efficacious, theism requires a rejection of both strong and weak naturalism. So, if you are a naturalist, you cannot also be a theist without inconsistency in your belief set. As we have seen, however, naturalism is unlikely to be true for properties such as truth. It also is questionable

with respect to other semantic properties as well as moral, modal, and mathematical properties. Moreover, as we have seen, there is some evidence that suggests that these properties can play a causal role, at least in a limited sense. If indeed this is true, then strong supernaturalism is true.

If strong supernaturalism is true, then non-physical entities can be causally efficacious. Causal closure of the physical realm then is false. But if this is so, then using one's rejection of beliefs in causally efficacious non-physical entities as a starting point for an argument for atheism is unsound. Despite the fact that the property of being true is not a physical property, it can play a role in causal chains that affect behavior; for instance, our knowledge of what is true can influence our behavior.

For example, learning that the proposition *John knows how to make hummus* bears the truth property may cause you to write down John's recipe for hummus. So, the truth property plays a role in the causal chain leading from your newly acquired knowledge to your action. Yet the truth property is not a physical entity. It is a non-physical entity with at least some limited causal powers.

This observation invalidates the move from a rejection of the supernatural to atheistic belief. Even though the theistic God is outside the realm of the physical, he could have causal powers that would allow him to influence the mind-independent external world in much the same way that the truth property can be causally efficacious – at least in a minimal sense.

Conclusion

Strong supernaturalism is the view that non-natural properties (e.g., truth, morality, modality, and a first mover) can be causally efficacious. I have argued that strong supernaturalism may be true for many of these of these properties. This leaves open that a supernatural being with God-like properties and no intrinsic physical properties can be causally efficacious in spite of the standard assumption to the effect that only physical entities can be causally efficacious.

If strong supernaturalism is true, however, then there is no direct inferential route from facts about science and the natural world to atheism or atheistic belief. To justify atheistic belief, one would need an argument against the existence of the supernatural entities depicted by the word "God" in the great variety of monotheistic religions.

Acknowledgment

I am grateful to Kelly James Clark for helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

Notes

- 1 I take this view to be a kind of Russellian monism or panpsychism. No facts about the inner essence of this non-standard force follows from the physical facts, except that it is not like the essences of the four fundamental physical forces (see Brogaard 2017).

- 2 Buddhism is not necessarily committed to supernatural entities. But in some of its manifestations it would still count as a kind of monotheism.
- 3 It is important to keep in mind that we are using “true” and its cognates in these two different ways: i.e., to refer to a property that truth-bearers have and to refer to the truth-bearers themselves when they have that property. The question I am concerned with here is whether naturalism about the truth-property (rather than the truth-bearers) is possible. Naturalism about certain truth-bearers (e.g. token sentences) certainly seems possible.

References

- Block, N., and Stalnaker, R. (1999) “Conceptual analysis, dualism, and the explanatory gap.” *Philosophical Review* 108: 1–46.
- Brogaard, B. (2016) “Against naturalism about truth,” in K. Clark (ed.) *Blackwell Companion to Naturalism*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Brogaard, B. (2017) “In search of mentons: Panpsychism, physicalism and the missing link,” in G. Brüntrup and L. Jaskolla (eds.) *Panpsychism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 130–152.
- Chalmers, D. (1996) *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Theory of Conscious Experience*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Chalmers, D. (2006) “Phenomenal concepts and the explanatory gap,” in T. Alter and S. Walter (eds.) *Phenomenal Concepts and Phenomenal Knowledge: New Essays on Consciousness and Physicalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 167–194.
- Chalmers, D. (2009) “The two-dimensional argument against materialism,” in B. McLaughlin, A. Beckermann, and S. Walter (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 313–335.
- Devitt, M. (1994) “The methodology of naturalistic semantics.” *Journal of Philosophy* 91: 545–572.
- Dowell J. (2004) “From metaphysical to substantive naturalism: A case study.” *Synthese* 138: 149–173.
- Dummett, M. (1959) “Truth.” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 59: 141–162.
- Field, H. (1994) “Deflationist views of meaning and content.” *Mind* 103: 249–284.
- Hill, C. (1997) “Imaginability, conceivability, possibility, and the mind-body problem.” *Philosophical Studies* 87: 61–85.
- Horwich, P. (1990) *Truth*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Koch, C. (2012) *Consciousness: Confessions of a Romantic Reductionist*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Levine, J. (1983) “Materialism and qualia: The explanatory gap.” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 64: 354–361.
- Loewer, B. (1997) “A guide to naturalizing semantics,” in C. Wright and B. Hale (eds.) *A Companion to the Philosophy of Language*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 108–126.
- Lycan, W (1996) *Consciousness and Experience*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Lynch, M. (2009) *Truth as One and Many*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Mulligan, K., and Correia, F. (2013) “Facts.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/facts/> (accessed 17 September 2018).
- Papineau, D. (2009) “Naturalism.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2009/entries/naturalism/> (accessed 17 September 2018).
- Peirce, C. (1992) *The Essential Peirce*, Vol. 1, ed. N. Houser and C. Kloesel. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Rosch, E. (1977) “Classification of real-world objects: origins and representations in cognition,” in P. Johnson-Laird and P. Wason *Thinking: Readings in Cognitive Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 212–222.

- Russell, B. (1956) "The philosophy of logical atomism," in *Logic and Knowledge: Essays 1901–1950*, ed. R. Marsh. London: George Allen and Unwin, pp. 177–281. Original work published 1918.
- Smart, J. (2016) "Atheism and agnosticism." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/atheism-agnosticism/> (accessed 17 September 2018).
- Stoljar, D., and Damnjanovic, N. (2010) "The deflationary theory of truth." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2010/entries/truth-deflationary/> (accessed 17 September 2018).
- Tye, M. (1995) *Ten Problems of Consciousness: A Representational Theory of the Phenomenal Mind*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1953) *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. Anscombe, ed. G. Anscombe and R. Rhees. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1961) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. Pears and B. McGuinness. London: Routledge. Original work published 1921.

18

Death

BETH SEACORD

A dead man is popularly believed to be capable of experiencing both good and ill fortune – honour and dishonour, and prosperity and the loss of it among his children and descendants generally – in exactly the same way if he were alive but unaware or unobservant of what is happening.

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.10 (cited in Partridge 1981)

Non fui; fui; non sum; non curo.

(I was not; I was; I am not; I do not care.)

Roman epitaph (cited in Rosenbaum 1993).

You have been keeping a diary most of your life. Much to your astonishment, you become a famous novelist. You decide that despite public interest in your personal relationships and creative process, you do not want your diaries to be widely read. Upon your death, you leave strict instructions for your diaries to be destroyed. While you are on your deathbed, however, your grandchildren decide to publish the diaries against your wishes. They reason that because you are gravely ill, you will never discover their betrayal (and they will be rich to boot). The diaries are published one week before your death. Let us call this case A. Have your grandchildren wronged you? Most of us have the intuition that you have been ill-treated even if you never find out about the publication of your diaries. Here is a similar, but a more controversial case. Let us call this case B: You leave instructions for your diaries to be destroyed upon your death. Shortly after your death, your grandchildren decide to publish your diaries. For the sake of argument, let us assume that human beings do not persist after death as vengeful ghosts, reincarnated spirits, or celestial beings. If death is the end of you, is it possible to be wronged? Have you been ill-treated by your grandchildren in Case B just as you had in Case A? In

answering this question, we are faced with the following *prima facie* plausible, yet conflicting propositions:

- (1) We care about posthumous events like the publication of our diaries after our death.
- (2) The dead cannot be harmed or wronged.

We care a great deal about the status of our reputations, the success of our projects and the wellbeing of our children after our proposition (1) is almost universally accepted (see Haidt, Koller, and Dias 1993). Most of us have a deep-seated psychological investment in post-mortem events: We care a great deal about the status of our reputations, the success of our projects, and the well-being of our children after our deaths.¹ Proposition (2) is the more controversial. Some, like Feinberg 1974; 1977; 1993; Pitcher (1993), and Levenbook (1984) argue that a person can be harmed after their death. Others, like Partridge (1981), Callahan (1987), Luper (2004), and Taylor (2005) have argued the opposite – that death puts us beyond the possibility of injury. I will first argue for the truth of proposition (2), that the dead cannot be harmed or wronged. This raises the further question: If the dead cannot be harmed or wronged, is it rational to care about post-mortem events such as the publication of one's diaries? I will argue that because death puts us beyond the possibility of harm or benefit, it is irrational to care about the future state of our reputations.

My case against the possibility of posthumous harm rests upon an assumption for which I give no argument: people who have died no longer exist in any meaningful sense. And, *ipso facto*, nonexistent beings cannot be the subjects of harms or the subject of wrongs. While it is impossible for the dead to be ill-treated, it is possible for a living person to act immorally toward the dead. But in every case where a person acts immorally concerning a deceased person, the victim of the immoral act will be a living person and not a dead one.

Because the view that the dead cannot be harmed is based on the foundational assumption that non-existent persons cannot be harmed, I will motivate my position by showing that our intuitions fit most naturally with my view. I will also provide an error theory that explains why we have recalcitrant intuitions about the dead being subjects of harms and wrongs.

The Feinberg–Pitcher Account of Posthumous Harm

Let us assume for the sake of argument that there is no afterlife – the dead do not hover as ghostly specters observing post-mortem events. In death, a person simply ceases to be. Can the dead be harmed? Joel Feinberg and George Pitcher say *yes*. Feinberg (1993, p. 4) argues that we are harmed when our interests are “set back” and benefited when our interests are realized. Borrowing from W. D. Ross, Feinberg contends that there are two ways that our interests can be realized: they can be satisfied or fulfilled. When a person's interests are satisfied, one has a “pleasant experience of contentment or gratification that typically occurs in the mind of the desirer when he believes that his desire has been fulfilled” (Feinberg (1993, p.177). When one's interests are fulfilled,

on the other hand, no subjective feeling of delight is required but merely “the coming into existence of that which is desired” (Feinberg (1993, p. 177). In other words, a person does not need to be aware that she got what she hoped for to be fulfilled in Feinberg’s sense. Similarly, one need not know that one’s desires have been thwarted to be harmed. Feinberg (1993, p. 179) continues, “... because the objects of a person’s interest are usually wanted or aimed-at events that occur outside his immediate experience and at some future time, the area of a person’s good or harm is necessarily wider than his subjective experience and longer than his biological life.” Feinberg reasons that if a person’s interests can be fulfilled or frustrated after his death, and harm (or benefit) is defined by the objective frustration or (fulfillment) of desires, then a person can be harmed (or benefited) after his death.

There are two serious difficulties with this account. First, interests are not free-floating, but must belong to some subject; however, we have stipulated that after death there is no subject. Pitcher addresses this concern by distinguishing between two ways we can refer to the dead person: (i) the *ante-mortem* person after his death and (ii) the post-mortem “person” in the grave. He writes, “no one would want to argue seriously that a post-mortem person can be harmed after his death ... dust can neither be harmed nor wronged” (Pitcher 1993, p. 162). Instead, he claims that all wrongs against the dead are committed against the ante-mortem person – “the person as he was before his death.” Although this solves the problem of the subject, a second difficulty arises: backward causation – if the ante-mortem person can be harmed after her death, then some event that happens now (after a person’s death) can affect the ante-mortem person while she is living. This explanation seems entirely implausible. However, Pitcher persuasively argues that it is not that the post-mortem event causes one to be harmed for the first time (*per impossible via* backward causation), but rather that it is the case that one *always* has been harmed by events that will happen. To illustrate, Pitcher gives the example of Bishop Berkeley’s beloved son William who died at 14 shortly after Berkeley’s own death. It is not that the post-mortem Berkeley is harmed for the first time upon William’s death, but instead, Berkeley was in a harmed state from the moment he formed an interest in the flourishing of his son William (presumably from the time of William’s birth). Pitcher argues that even though Berkeley is unaware of William’s impending death, the fact that William will die after Berkeley harms the living Berkeley. Pitcher’s solution seems odd, yet Pitcher defends the plausibility of the Berkeley case by drawing upon the supposed similarity of the following: “if the world should be blasted to smithereens during the next presidency after Ronald Reagan’s, this would make it true ... that even now, during Reagan’s term, he is the penultimate president of the United States” (Pitcher 1993, p. 168; the article was originally published in 1984). So, to update Pitcher’s example, an event that will happen later, doomsday in 2020, can make it true that at the time of writing Trump is currently the penultimate president of the United States.² This is a true statement. If Trump can presently be called “the penultimate president” because of doomsday 2020, then Berkeley can be presently in a harmed state because of the future death of his son William.

I will focus on one objection raised by James Stacey Taylor and a second of my own. First, Taylor notes there is a significant difference between assigning new properties like “being the penultimate president” to the ante-mortem person and ascribing the state of

being harmed to the ante-mortem person. Taylor (2005, p. 315) argues: "Showing that certain properties can be retroactively ascribed in this way is not enough to show that attributing posthumous harm to persons need not commit one to endorsing backward causation." In short, claiming that the post-mortem person is in a harmed state is importantly different from changing the description of the post-mortem person: the first involves ascribing a state of harm which belongs to the ante-mortem person, the second involves no change in the ante-mortem person, but a change in our concept of them (see Marquis 1985).³

Second, my objection focuses on the Berkeley family case. The Berkeley family's situation is different from the Reagan/Trump cases because the first involves ascribing harm to ante-mortem persons while the second does not. Pitcher claims that William's death which occurs after Berkeley's makes it true that Berkeley was in a harmed state while he was alive. However, Pitcher (1993, pp.165–166) sneaks in the inevitability of William's death by asking us to consider a modified version of his thought experiment – a version where William is fated to die young. He asks us to imagine that William has a "rare allergy to a certain virus ... that the child was bound to come into contact with" and "his friends know, though Berkeley did not, that his son was *fated* to die young" (emphasis my own). Pitcher concludes that Berkeley's friends who knew of William's illness "would have felt very sorry for Berkeley – and not just because there would eventually be the tragedy of his son's early death, but also because then (i.e., before his son's death) there was a grave misfortune in Berkeley's life" (1993, pp.165–166). If William is fated to die, then this means that nothing anyone does or will do can prevent William from dying. Being fated to die young would be a misfortune if there were such a thing as fate. However, fatalism is a highly implausible metaphysical theory that virtually no philosophers have endorsed. I do not believe that Pitcher intends to invoke fatalism. Instead, he probably means that there is a very high probability that William will die young. If this is the case, then the misfortune or harm in the Berkeley family is not that William *will* die at some future time, but that William currently (in 1750) has a disease that puts him at significant risk for death. So it is not his future death, but the disease which he currently has that is the source of misfortune or harm. We can see this more clearly if we posit that the cause of William's death is not a lingering disease, but the accidental trampling by a horse. To say that it is true now that William's future death harms Bishop Berkeley presupposes that the future where William is trampled by a horse is locked in – that there is no way that William can avoid the trampling. While there are some philosophies of time (four-dimensionalism, eternalism) or theories of freedom (fatalism, determinism) which entail that it is true now that William will die, these theories are not uncontroversial. If the future is completely determined, then it is very plausible to view future events as establishing facts about a currently existing person in much the same way that past events do. Just as Kristin's childhood love of horses is a historical fact about her now that she is an adult, so, if determinism/fatalism is true, her *future* marriage to Bob is a fact about her now.⁴ But suppose one has reason to believe that the future is open – perhaps one is a growing block theorist or a presentist about time or a libertarian about freedom. If the future is open, it is not true now that Kristin will marry Bob and it is not true "now" (in 1750) that William will die. If the future is open, William may not die, Kristin may not marry Bob and Trump may not

turn out to be the penultimate president. So in other words, if the future is not strictly determined, all grounds for the plausibility of ascribing present qualities to individuals on the basis of future events evaporates. Therefore, part of the reason we should reject the Feinberg–Pitcher account of posthumous harm is that it depends upon an unargued for, fatalistic view of future events. The other reason we should reject the Feinberg–Pitcher account is that my account, below, does a better job at accounting for our intuitions about harms to the dead.

The Case Against Posthumous Harms

According to proposition (2) from the section above, the dead cannot be harmed or wronged. This seems entirely plausible. But why? One might suppose that it is because the dead are unaware of posthumous events and this is what protects them from harm. In other words, it is the dead person's lack of awareness of the harm that safeguards them from it. But being unaware of harm is neither a necessary⁵ nor sufficient condition for being immune to harm. What we don't know can indeed hurt us. There are the obvious counter-examples of things of which we are unaware that cause us harm. For example, we may unknowingly contract an illness which slowly leeches the life from us. The mere fact that we do not know that we are ill does not protect us from the illness's harm. Slander is another example. Even if we are unaware of slander, it may rob us of opportunities (e.g., invitations to parties, promotions, or friendships) we might have had but for the slander. So it is not *just* that the dead are unaware of the goings-on in the world of the living that safeguards them from harm (although being unaware shields the dead from *some* harm). What is it, then, to be harmed? According to the comparative account of harm, a "harm" is a state of affairs that makes one worse off than one would otherwise have been.⁶ Being made worse off is both a necessary and a sufficient condition for being harmed. In the cases above, one is made worse off when one contracts the illness, and one is also made worse off by being slandered. Given this definition, is it possible for the dead to be harmed? No: the dead cannot be harmed because the dead cannot be made worse off than they already are. As Steven Luper (2004, p.63) aptly observes: "the damage death itself does is so severe that people are not subject to harm by any subsequent events." Death is, *ceteris paribus*, the worst of all harms because it puts one into a state of nonexistence – a state in which no further harms or benefits are possible. Further, the harming (or benefiting) relation must have, at least, two parts: "x wrongs y" (or "x wrongs y and z" or "x and y wrong z" and so on ...). It is impossible for the harming relation to have one part – it is impossible for x to harm y if y does not exist. If there is no subject of the harm, then there can be no harm. Therefore, nonexistence is a sufficient condition for being immune to harm.

An objection to this account of harm is that if one cannot be harmed when one does not exist, one also cannot be harmed by death itself – even murder. Suppose that Sue is murdered, and her death is instantaneous; She is disintegrated by a futuristic laser gun. When Sue is killed she ceases to exist and, as I have argued above, a person who does not exist cannot be harmed. Therefore, Sue's murder did not harm her because one cannot be harmed when one does not exist. It follows that putting a person into a state of nonexistence is no harm at all, especially if death is instantaneous. It seems then, that

the harm of death and harms that might occur after death stand or fall together because they both occur when the person no longer exists. Feinberg (1993, p.174) observes:

If the prior interests set back by death justify our characterization of death as a harm (even without a subject), then equally some of them warrant our speaking of certain later events as posthumous harms. On the other hand, if the absence of a subject (even given prior interests whose targets postdate death) prevents us from speaking as death as a harm, then it equally precludes talk of posthumous harms. Death and developments after death are alike in coming into existence during a period when there is no longer a subject.

If my position implied that murder did not harm the victim, then this would be a serious problem, even a *reductio*, of my view. However, this need not be the case. The difference between the harm of death and the putative “harm” of posthumous events is that death robs one of what one might have had – more life. Posthumous events cannot rob you of anything else because you are not alive to have them. Consider the following case: Suppose you are to inherit one million dollars from a distant uncle, but without your knowledge, the investment firm which manages your inheritance account loses your money due to irresponsible investing; you are never told about this. In this case, you are harmed because the investors acted irresponsibly and lost the money you might have had. Murder is similar in the following way: when one murders you, you are robbed of what you might have had – more life – if the murderer had refrained from killing you. In short, there is a possible world where you were not murdered, and you were able to enjoy more life. However, it makes no sense to say that you can be harmed by posthumous events because you are already dead. If you are already dead, there is no possible world where you are dead and might have had more money, a nicer vacation, or another piece of cake. When you kill someone, you harm them by depriving them of what they would have had but for your actions. In the posthumous case, you cannot be deprived of anything more because death has already deprived you of everything. Therefore, one can deny that posthumous events harm us while affirming that death itself is, *ceteris paribus*, is a serious harm.

Another objection to the immunity of the dead to harm is that there is little difference between being made worse off by states of affairs of which we are unaware and the dead being made worse off by post-mortem events. In other words, if the living can be made worse off by events that have no effect on them, it seems that the dead might also be made worse off by these same facts. Consider the following case: Suppose that Jane’s son is captured by enemy combatants, and there is no way for Jane to discover what has happened to him; she just knows he is captured. Suppose further her son is tortured by the enemy. One may think either: (i) Jane is not made worse off, in any relevant sense, by the pain her son experiences and does not know about or (ii) Jane is made worse off. If (i) is true, then many will find this counterintuitive. If (ii) is true then one will want to know why a deceased person cannot be made worse off by what they cannot know when Jane *can* be made worse off by what she doesn’t know.⁶ Feinberg makes a similar point. He argues:

If someone spreads a libelous description of me, without my knowledge, among hundreds of persons in a remote part of the country, so that I am, still without my knowledge, an object of general scorn and mockery in that group, I have been injured in virtue of the

harm done my interest in a good reputation, even though I never learn what has happened. That is because I have an interest, so I believe, in having a good reputation as such, in addition to my interest in avoiding hurt feelings, embarrassment, and economic injury. And that interest can be seriously harmed without my ever learning of it. (Feinberg 1977, pp. 305–306)

However, there is an important disanalogy between these cases and cases of purported posthumous harm. The two thought experiments above sneak in knowledge of bad-states of affairs, risks of harm or actual harm to the living that would not occur if the subjects were dead. This skews our intuitions about these cases. In the Jane case, she knows that her son has been captured. The horrible worry and anxiety that Jane undergoes on behalf of her son is a source of harm to Jane. She *knows* that her son is not thriving as a prisoner of war. If we were to keep the cases appropriately similar one should imagine that Jane is a prisoner on the Isle of Elba. She is entirely cut off from the outside world. She is not kept informed about the welfare of her family. Unbeknownst to Jane, her son joins the military and is taken captive and tortured. This is surely bad for Jane's son, but it doesn't make *Jane* worse off as she sits in her cell unaware of her son's agony. To review, someone is harmed if they are made worse off than they would have been otherwise. Jane is not made worse off by her son's prisoner of war status because she doesn't know about it. But Jane can be made worse by other events she is unaware of, the disease she has but doesn't know of yet, the jailer who is poisoning her food, and so on.

Feinberg's slander case is also disanalogous to the position of a deceased individual. In cases of libel or slander of which we are unaware, our intuitions that we are made worse off are almost always influenced by the potential for the slander to make us worse off. Suppose that a group of Jane's colleagues spread lies about her behind her back. These lies may prevent Jane from getting a promotion she deserves and, therefore, make her worse off, or it may prevent her from getting invited to parties. If we were to make the slander case parallel, we could stipulate that such gossip is spread among unlettered peoples of some remote island. "The alleged harm would seem to fade with the likelihood of feedback and, significantly, to the degree that the "victim" is an identifiable person to those who deride him" (Partridge 1981, p. 251).

Once the differences between dead and living subjects are removed, then one can see that the living person, like the dead person, is unharmed. So far I have argued that the dead cannot be harmed. I have not yet shown that the dead cannot be wronged.

The Case against Posthumous Wrongs

It would be helpful at this point to clarify the usage of the words "harm" and "wrong." As mentioned above, the best account of harm is a comparative account. One is harmed when she is made worse off than she would otherwise have been. Being made worse off is both a necessary and a sufficient condition for being harmed. A wrong, on the other hand, is broader in scope than a harm. One cannot be harmed without being wronged. But one can be wronged without being harmed. For example, suppose someone violates

my rights but does not make me worse off (i.e., harm me) by doing so. Suppose Bill Gates is having a bit of fun and decides to burn down a few houses.⁷ His minions trash your house, burn your treasured possessions and leave the place in ruins. Before he departs, he writes you a check for a billion dollars. In this case, Gates will have violated your rights – Gates has wronged you but has not harmed you because he has left you much better off than you were before.

So far we have said nothing about the original pair of cases:

Case A: Your grandchildren publish your diaries against your wishes before your death although you never learn of it.

Case B: Your grandchildren publish your diaries against your wishes after your death.

If A is harmed, but B is not, what is the difference? Some philosophers have argued that there is no principled way to drive a wedge between pre-death and post-death cases. Partridge (1981, p.251) writes: “I am inclined to believe ... that no logical wedge can be inserted such that the former can be said to be “harmed” and the latter cannot. One is obliged, therefore, either to affirm ... that both can be harmed or to state that both cannot be harmed.”

This might be true in some cases, for instance, in the slander and torture cases above, but not in all cases. I will argue that it is possible for the person in case A to be wronged, but it is not possible for the person in case B to be wronged.

Most of us have the intuition that publication of the dying person’s diary against her wishes wrongs her in some way. How so? It is possible that the publication of the diaries harms the living person because it makes her worse off: perhaps the hospital staff finds out what is written in the diaries and begin to treat her differently. Or perhaps people read the diaries and decide not to visit or bring the flowers. If this were the case, then the living person in case A is harmed by the publication of the diaries even if she is unaware that her diaries have been made public. But for the sake of argument, let us stipulate that the hospital staff and relatives of the dying person do not read the diaries; the diaries are turned over to a publishing house to be published and read later. We still have the intuition that the person in case A is wronged even though her life goes just as it would have if her grandchildren had not published the diaries. What is the source of the wrong if you are not made worse off by the publication of the diaries? My suggestion is that our diaries are of such a personal nature that when our wishes regarding them are violated, it counts as a violation of our rights. (A full defense of our rights to control personal property is beyond the scope of this paper. However, this point is sufficiently uncontroversial that we can stipulate that the publication of our diary without our consent is a rights violation.) When my diary is published without my consent, my rights are violated, and this wrongs me.

What about case B? In case B, you have died, and your diaries are published after your death. Is it possible for the person in case A but not the person in case B to be wronged? As we saw above, the person in case A is wronged because her rights are violated. Is it possible for the deceased person in case B to be wronged for this same reason – is it possible for a dead or non-existent person to have her rights violated? At first glance, it seems that rights must belong to some entity or other, and if we stipulate

that the dead do not exist, then it simply follows that the dead have no rights. A simple argument for this is as follows:

- (1) Non-existent beings have no rights.
- (2) The dead are non-existent.
- (3) Therefore, the dead have no rights.

As we have already stipulated the truth of premise (2), the controversial premise is premise (1). Premise (1) is based on a foundation assumption: non-existent beings, by definition, cannot be the subjects of harms or the subject of wrongs. Because this is a foundational assumption, I will attempt to motivate the intuition that premise one is more plausible than its negation.

There are three types of non-existent beings: (i) beings that have never existed and will never exist, (ii) beings that do not exist, but will exist, and (iii) beings that existed at one time or another but have now ceased to exist. What about the first type of “being?” Can we make sense of the idea that beings that have never existed at all (i.e., possible persons, fictional persons) have rights? Does the fictional character Gandalf have claims against us? Does Harry Potter have claims against J. K. Rowling? This idea should strike us as absurd. Gandalf and Harry Potter can have no rights because they have no interests. And the primary reason they have no interests is that they do not exist.

What about the second type of “being” – individuals who have not yet been conceived but will be? Discussions about the status of future generations are lengthy and complicated so, although I am inclined to say that non-existent, future beings have no rights, I am prepared to concede this point for the sake of argument – I will concede that future persons have claims against us because they will have interests. The choices we make now affect the class of *de re* beings who come to fill the *de dicto* descriptor “future generation.” However, non-existent, future persons are importantly different from non-existent, past persons. Future beings have claims against us because what we do will make a difference to them. But nothing we do now can make a difference to those who are deceased.

Some might object that although the dead have no current interests and will have no future interests, they have past interests. Do the dead have rights in virtue of their past interests? Consider the following example: suppose a group of seven college freshmen buy a big-screen television together. They decide that each person will get to choose the television programming on their assigned day. Suppose that one of the seven students die. And suppose that the dying student cares deeply about the television schedule and demands that the television continues to be tuned to “Dancing with the Stars” at 8 pm every Thursday after her death. Does this past requirement of the now-deceased student carry a claim against the living students? Does the dead student still have a right to her television night? And are the remaining six students morally obligated to restrict their Thursday television based on the dead person’s claim? It seems not. But someone might object that this example only shows that some of a living person’s rights perish with them; it does not show that *all* of their rights expire upon their death. But what is the difference between one’s right to control one bit of property – a television and another bit of property, like jewelry or a coin collection? If one has a right to something that just means that one’s claim to something lets them restrict the actions of others.

Suppose someone objects that one's right to control property like coin collections and jewelry ought to be respected but one's right to control property like a television need not be respected because the former is important while the latter is trivial. This distinction is revealing for two reasons: First, whether something is trivial should not matter if someone has a right to it. Second, if someone objects that it is the fact that the dead person's wish is frivolous that influences our intuition that we need not respect the dead person's rights to have the television tuned to "Dancing with the Stars," then it is the independent value of the request and not the dead person's rights that are at issue. In short, if I object that I would respect the dead person's rights if their appeal were an important one, then it is the importance of the request that is doing the work, not the dead person's rights. Therefore, the dead do not have claims against the living because nothing the living does can make a difference to the dead.

If it is impossible to wrong the dead by violating their rights or harm them or injure them by making them worse off, then whence is our obligation to respect a dying person's wishes? Many of us will still have the strong intuition that we have obligations to honor the promises we make to the dying and that we commit a serious wrong when we break these promises. But if we accept premises (1) and (2) above, then the wrong perpetrated by the grandchildren in case B cannot be a wrong committed against the dead. If there is a wrong committed by the grandchildren, then the wrong must be perpetrated against the living. But against whom? The best candidate for the wrong is our fellow human beings – the moral community. When we break a promise we made to a person who is now dead, we undermine the confidence that we-the-living have that our progeny will keep the promises they make to us. These actions cause anxiety and distress in the living when we cannot be confident that our wills and wishes will be faithfully carried out. The belief that our wishes will be fulfilled gives the dying some measure of peace, and if promises to the dead are routinely broken, then this would create distress in the living.

An Error Theory for Recalcitrant Intuitions

Some may object that this response does not adequately account for our intuition about the wrongness of breaking promises to the dead like the diary case. We have the intuition that the *deceased person* is wronged, not the moral community. Maybe our intuition is motivated by additional bad-making features of the act. Perhaps the diaries do not just contain poetry but contain the dead person's angry thoughts about her students and colleagues that would be hurtful to the living if they were read. If the publication of the diaries has independent bad-making features, apart from the promise breaking, then this might account for our intuitions about the case. But one might object that this still does not capture the wrongness of case B. When people find out what the deceased person's grandchildren have done in case B, they feel horrified on behalf of the deceased. Many of us will still have the recalcitrant intuition that the grandchildren wronged their grandmother, the author of the diaries, when they betrayed the promise they made to her by publishing the diaries after her death against her express wishes. However, I would like to suggest that these intuitions are not justified moral beliefs, but are to be accounted for psychologically.⁸

Human beings have the capacity to transcend the present moment by imagining the future and remembering the past. We can rise above our own time and place and envision events playing out after our death.⁹ It is this gift of imagination that forms the basis of our ability to care about events that will occur after our deaths. It is this power to conceive of oneself as an object of conscious reflection after our death that is the source of our belief that the dead can be harmed. It is because we falsely imagine ourselves existing to be the subject of shame and slander. As Lucretius first observed in *On the Nature of Things*, Book III, we slip from a first-person perspective into a third-person perspective when we consider cases of harm to the dead:

For when in life one pictures to oneself
His body dead by beasts and vultures torn,
He pities his state, dividing not himself
Therefrom, removing not the self enough
From the body flung away, imagining
Himself that body, and projecting there
His own sense, as he stands beside it: hence
He grieves that he is mortal born, nor marks
That in true death there is no second self
Alive and able to sorrow for self destroyed,
Or stand lamenting that the self lies there
Mangled or burning.

Lucretius (1950), *Folly of the Fear
of Death*, ll. 64–75

The reason many of us have the recalcitrant intuition that the dead have been wronged stems from our ability to imagine ourselves in the place of the dead person. We identify with our deceased friends and relatives, imagining ourselves in their shoes as the subject of posthumous slander. Many of us retain the intuition that the dead person – the person whose diary was published against her will, is harmed because we mistakenly imagine her as a being capable of harm. We imagine the shame and horror she would have felt had she lived to see her diaries published. And we imagine that she is still capable of suffering such feelings. But when we engage in this imagining we are exploiting the third-person point of view which is not available to the deceased person. If we are dead, then posthumous events can make no difference to us. Not one moment of our lives is changed by what happens after our deaths.

Rationality and Posthumous Events

So far I have argued that the dead can neither be harmed nor wronged after death. However, we retain a keen interest in posthumous events – we care deeply about not being defamed, slandered, or disgraced through the publication of our diaries after our deaths. The puzzle is why we should care so much if we also accept the proposition that the dead cannot be harmed or wronged? Consider the following three propositions:

- (4) Death is the end of us – death renders us non-existent.
- (5) Non-existent persons cannot be harmed or wronged.
- (6) The posthumous publication of our diaries will strike a blow to our dignity and thus constitute a harm.

A necessary condition for rationality is that our beliefs be coherent. To be rational one cannot hold (4), (5), and (6) together but must eject at least one. As we have already seen, there are strong reasons to accept (4) and (5). Therefore, rationality requires that we jettison (6) – the belief that our dignity will be wounded if we are slandered posthumously. The error theory above explains why we may be psychologically reluctant to discard (6).¹⁰

Conclusion

The belief that posthumous events will wound us is ill-founded especially if one's concern is pride or self-respect. If propositions (4) and (5) are true, then all of our self-regarding posthumous wishes will turn out to be irrational. In contrast, non-self-regarding posthumous wishes for the good of the living are not irrational. Our hope that our children live long, happy lives, our desire for polar bears to continue to thrive, our wish that philosophy continues to be a fruitful discipline, are all rational post-mortem desires because they are made on behalf of the living.

Notes

- 1 As Samuel Scheffler (2013) has recently pointed out, our investment in post-mortem events is so deeply rooted that we organize our lives based on our beliefs about what will occur after we are gone.
- 2 Barring the impeachment or assassination of the 45th President of the United States.
- 3 Thank you to Andrew Spear for making this suggestion.
- 4 Not knowing about something is not a necessary condition for not being hurt because one might (i) know about something that is not harmful, or (ii) know about something harmful and not care.
- 5 See Feinberg (1974; 1977; 1993), Parfit (1984), Kagan (1998), Norcross (2005). Also, see Bradley (2009), for a defense of the comparative account of harm.
- 6 Thank you to Iskra Fileva for posing this objection.
- 7 Thanks to Trent Dougherty for the "Gatenator" example.
- 8 Callahan (1987, p. 347) makes a similar suggestion.
- 9 Most feel a need to transcend their deaths by remaining in the memories of others. The desire to be remembered fondly reflects a desire to continue to be a part of the relationships that we care most about while we are alive. Suppose that contrary to your wishes your children never give you a second thought after your death. Why would you consider this a misfortune? There are two reasons why we consider being forgotten a terrible thing. First, it is a sign that we don't mean much to those that we love now. And this indeed is a terrible thing. If we die and our loved ones do not grieve for us, this says something about the current state of our relationships. Perhaps our fear that we will be forgotten after our deaths is really a concern about our current importance.

Second, if our children never give us a second thought after our death then we might consider this a misfortune because our children have a poor character – they are ungrateful and self-centered. So it seems that our desire to be remembered can be explained as a desire to have been important to the ones we love during our lives.

- 10 Some may object that our posthumous desires to be spoken of well or to have our bodies treated with dignity after our deaths are so strong and so widely shared that they cannot be deemed irrational. To do so would be to stretch the definition of ‘rational’ beyond its usual usage. Consider the following case: Suppose that shortly after my death someone uses my body for target practice or uses my body to satisfy necrophilic urges. Surely, one objects, we would not be irrational to believe that such an event would harm our dignity. But, the idea that our dignity would be harmed by these acts is based on a mistake. Our objection to treating the dead in these ways stems from a) a non-rational disgust at such practices—bodies being torn apart by bullets or sex with inanimate objects has a strong non-rational ‘yuck factor’ built in and b) we may have a moral objection that the person shooting dead bodies for fun is a budding killer or that the necrophilic coroner is a date rapist in training. As I mentioned above, posthumous desires that are made on behalf of the living are not irrational. So if our main objection to having my dead body used as a target by a hate group is that one does not want to aid this hate group in any way, then this is a rational desire. It is also rational to not want to have one’s friends and relatives more upset by my death than they already are. In summary, my desire not to be ‘defiled’ after my death is rational only if that desire is based upon the best interests of the living.

References

- Bradley, B. (2009) “Analyzing harm.” Unpublished paper.
- Callahan, J. (1987) “On harming the dead.” *Ethics* 97: 341–352.
- Feinberg, J. (1974) “The rights of animals and unborn generations,” in W. Blackstone (ed.) *Philosophy and Environmental Crisis*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, pp. 43–68.
- Feinberg, J. (1977) “Harm and self-interest,” in P. Hacker and J. Raz (eds.) *Law, Morality and Society: Essays in Honour of H. L. A. Hart*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 284–306.
- Feinberg, J. (1993) “Harm to others,” in J. Fischer (ed.) *The Metaphysics of Death*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 169–190.
- Haidt, J., Koller S., and Dias, M. (1993) “Affect, culture and morality: Is it wrong to eat your dog?” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 65, 613–628.
- Kagan, S. (1998) *Normative Ethics*. Boulder: Westview.
- Levenbook, B. (1984) “Harming someone after his death.” *Ethics* 94: 407–419.
- Lucretius (1950) *Of the Nature of Things*, trans. W. Leonard, Everyman’s Library. London: Dutton.
- Luper, S. (2004) “Posthumous harm.” *Philosophical Quarterly* 41: 63–72.
- Marquis, D. (1985) “Harming the dead.” *Ethics* 96: 159–161.
- Norcross, A. (2005) “Harming in context.” *Philosophical Studies* 123: 149–173.
- Parfit, D. (1984) *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Partridge, E. (1981) “Posthumous interests and posthumous respect.” *Ethics* 91: 243–264.
- Pitcher, G. (1993) “The misfortunes of the dead,” in J. Fischer (ed.) *The Metaphysics of Death*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 157–168.
- Rosenbaum, S. (1993) “How to be dead and not care: A defense of Epicurus.” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 23: 217–225.
- Scheffler, S. (2013) *Death and the Afterlife*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Taylor, J. (2005) “The myth of posthumous harm.” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 42: 311–322.

Part V

Epistemology

Skepticism

DUNCAN PRITCHARD

In what follows, I will assume, for simplicity, a theistic conception of God. For now, at least, I will also take it for granted that religious conviction, on the theistic conception, essentially involves a belief that God exists (though we will be questioning this assumption later on). Relatedly, I will also take it as given that atheism is to be understood as the thesis that God, on the theistic conception, does not exist. Someone who endorses atheism thus believes that God, so understood, does not exist. With the debate characterized in this way, there is a very natural way of understanding the relationship, in its most general form, between skepticism and atheism, which is that skeptical arguments directed at religious belief – concerning, say, our putative lack of sufficient evidence for thinking that God exists – can be used to motivate an atheistic outlook. My aim here is to cast light on some of the more specific ways in which atheism and skepticism might be related to one another. My focus will be on some key skeptical arguments – and one *master argument* in particular – regarding the rationality of religious belief which, if successful, would in turn provide support for atheism. But we will also be considering the claim that the putative flaws in these skeptical arguments can be used to defend the rationality of religious belief, and thereby undermine the case for atheism (at least insofar as the latter is dependent upon such skeptical arguments). Finally, we will also look at how *fideistic*, and *quasi-fideistic*, treatments of the epistemology of religious belief might well avoid atheism while also preserving a certain kind of general skepticism.¹

Skepticism and Atheism: The Master Argument

Consider the following argument, which makes a case for atheism via a general skepticism about the rationality of religious belief (or *religious skepticism*, for short). For reasons that will become apparent, I will be calling this the *master argument*:

- (1) Theistic religious conviction requires one to believe in the existence of God.
- (2) Belief in the existence of God is rational only if there is sufficient evidence for the existence of God.
- (3) There is not sufficient evidence for the existence of God.
- (4) Therefore, belief in God's existence is not rational. (From (2), (3).)
- (5) If a belief is not rational, then it should not be held.
- (6) Therefore, one should not have theistic religious conviction. (From (1), (5).)
- (7) Therefore, one should be an atheist. (From (6).)

Each of these claims seems highly plausible. Let's start with (1). What else could a theistic religious conviction be if it didn't involve belief in the existence of God? For example, how could one have theistic religious conviction if one is, say, *agnostic* about whether God exists? Likewise, (2) seems like a straightforward truism about rational belief. If one's belief lacks appropriate supporting evidence, then surely it can't be rationally held. (3) is more controversial, and so one might think that this is the weak link in the argument (though as we will see one can dispute most, if not all, of the claims in play here). We will consider some reasons to endorse (3) in a moment. Premises (2) and (3) collectively capture one historically prominent motivation for skepticism about the rationality of religious belief, which is the broadly *evidentialist* line that sufficient evidence is required to rationally belief in God's existence but such evidence is lacking.²

Premise (4) follows deductively from premises (2) and (3), and so ought to be uncontroversial. Premise (5) just seems to be an obvious point about belief. Of course, such a belief might be hard, perhaps impossible, for the person with genuine religious conviction to ever give up. And yet, from the perspective of rationality, one ought not to have it, just as one ought not to have a belief that one's child is innocent of that dreadful crime once it becomes clear that the evidence for his guilt is overwhelming. Finally, (6) follows deductively from premises (1) and (5), and so ought to be uncontroversial. Arguably, (7) is an obvious consequence of (6), though as we will see in due course, there are reasons to dispute this transition.

The reason why I refer to this line of reasoning as a "master argument" is that we can capture several general types of religious skepticism via this template, and also in the process thereby capture several kinds of responses to such skepticism. We can most immediately see this point in action by considering the various ways in which one might try to motivate premise (3). The reasons here are numerous. For example, one might think that the evidence for God's existence is always *underdetermined*, such that there are always equally plausible alternative explanations for that evidence that don't demand the existence of a God (e.g., that the burning bush that is apparently dripping in religious significance is nothing more than a coincidence that is causally due to lightning). In effect, the argument to (3) involves a sub-argument that appeals to a very plausible underdetermination principle:

The Underdetermination Principle for Rational Belief: If one's evidential basis for believing that *p* does not prefer *p* over a known to be incompatible alternative, *q*, then one's belief that *p* is not rational.³

This principle is very plausible, since it is hard to see how evidence that is indifferent to the truth of known to be incompatible alternatives (or, worse, actually favors the non-believed incompatible alternative) can be consistent with one having a rational belief in the target proposition. Wouldn't it be more rational to (at least) suspend belief? But with this principle in play then one can appeal to a further subpremise to generate one's motivation for (3). That is, one can argue that one lacks an evidential basis that prefers belief in God over known to be incompatible alternatives, such as that one's evidence in fact only demonstrates that one's experience of, say, the burning bush is simply due to the coincident lightning strike on the bush, and nothing at all to do with God's agency.

One might further supplement this kind of line with some claim to the effect that any explanation of the evidence that appeals to a mysterious entity like a God, rather than more mundane entities in the usual causal order (like lightning), is bound to be at an epistemic disadvantage. Or one might supplement it by claiming that the kind of evidence cited by religious believers is not of the right kind, on account of its tendency to presuppose religious commitment in the first place. (Think, for example, of religious experiences in this regard.) Instead, what is required is evidence that meets some sort of objective standard, and hence can be appreciated as such even by those who lack such conviction. One might then argue that, with the evidence so construed, evidence for God's existence is conspicuously lacking.⁴

Another skeptical line in defense of (3) – which is often taken to be roughly equivalent to underdetermination-based skepticism, but which I have argued elsewhere is in fact logically distinct – is to appeal to skeptical hypotheses and some form of closure-style principle.⁵ So, for example, one might argue that one's evidential basis for belief in the existence of God does not exclude the skeptical hypothesis that there is no God and one only thinks that there is because of some sort of deception that one cannot rationally exclude, such as a concerted attempt to trick one into believing that there is a God. For example, imagine that there is no God, but suppose further that there are scientists who have detailed knowledge of everyone's cognitive processes (such as their cognitive biases, etc.), to such an extent that they know what kinds of experiences would trigger someone to falsely believe that God exists and sustain that belief thereafter. Imagine further that they undetectably engineer this response as part of an elaborate experiment, and continue to undetectably prompt experiences that they know will sustain this belief. Given how this skeptical scenario is described one does not seem to be in a position to offer a rational basis for excluding it, as it is indistinguishable from one's current experience. As with the underdetermination-based skeptical argument against rational religious belief just noted, this argument also appeals to a sub-argument in support of its defense of premise (3). The first part of the sub-argument is the claim just noted—viz., that one lacks a rational basis to dismiss a certain skeptical possibility. The second part of the sub-argument, again in keeping with underdetermination-based skepticism, is to appeal to an epistemic principle that effects the required epistemic damage:

The Closure Principle for Rational Belief: If one's evidential basis is sufficient for rational belief that *p*, and one knows that *p* entails *q*, then one's evidential basis is sufficient for rational belief that *q*.⁶

This principle seems eminently plausible, in that one's sufficient evidential basis for rational belief appears closed under known entailment, at least in usual cases. Suppose I rationally believe that I am sitting down in virtue of a particular evidential basis (my current experiences, say), and I know that if one is sitting down then one is not standing up. Isn't one then in an evidential position to know that one is not standing up? But if that's right, and if it's true that one is unable to eliminate skeptical alternatives to one's belief in the existence of God, such as the scenario described earlier, then it follows that one lacks a sufficient evidential basis for rational belief in the existence of God, in line with (3). That is, if I did have an evidential basis that was sufficient for rational belief that God exists, then I would have an evidential basis that was sufficient for rational belief that I am not subject to the skeptical scenario just outlined (i.e., where there is no God, but I have been "primed" to believe otherwise by the scientists). Conversely, if the latter is not possible, then neither is the former, and hence I lack an evidential basis that is sufficient for rational belief that God exists.

There are, of course, other ways of arguing for the truth of a claim like (3). One might appeal to the argument from evil, for example, and thereby claim that the fundamental tension between the essential properties of God (such as his goodness) and what we know about the world around us (such as that apparently pointless evil exists) entails that we lack sufficient evidence for rational belief in the existence of God.⁷ Or one might argue that whether one has a belief in God's existence is so completely contingent upon one's cultural upbringing that it follows that one doesn't really have an evidential basis sufficient for rational belief for this proposition at all.⁸ And so on.

Radical Skepticism and Religious Skepticism

How persuasive we find the master argument from skepticism to atheism will very much depend on the particular kind of skeptical argument that is plugged into it. Given their prevalence within mainstream discussions of radical skepticism, one might think that the strongest renderings of the master argument will be those that employ the underdetermination or closure principles.⁹ In fact, I think that the exact opposite is the case. The reason for this is that these principles are effective in radical skeptical arguments precisely because the skeptical alternatives in play are radical error-possibilities that call the rational standing of one's beliefs as a whole into question, as opposed to local error-possibilities that call into question the rational standing of a much more restricted set of beliefs. And yet the kinds of skeptical alternatives at issue when it comes to skepticism about the rationality of religious belief are by their nature local error-possibilities.

Let's start by examining that last point. Why is it important that if religious skepticism appeals to error-possibilities at all, then they should be local rather than radical error-possibilities? The reason for this is that religious skepticism isn't particularly interesting if it turns out to just be radical skepticism about the rationality of belief in general. Rather, the claim is meant to be that there is something specifically rationally amiss about religious belief, and not that there is something rationally amiss with *all* belief, and thus, *a fortiori*, religious belief also. In effect, the charge is that religious skepticism that proceeds in this way demonstrates too much, if it demonstrates anything. Moreover,

notice that this point has an additional edge to it insofar as we are thinking of religious skepticism being geared towards motivating atheism. If the former entails that the rational status of all belief is now up for grabs, then it can hardly be employed in defense of the rationality of adopting the latter.

So the error-possibilities employed as part of an underdetermination- or closure-based religious skepticism had better be local error-possibilities that merely call the rationality of a subset of one's beliefs into question (as was the case, in fact, with regard to the scenarios employed above), and not all of one's beliefs *en masse*. The problem, however, is that what makes radical skeptical error-possibilities so hard to exclude is precisely their radical nature. This is because they call into question one's background beliefs as well, so that there is nothing whose rational status is not being called into question by the scenario that one can appeal to. There would be no point, for example, arguing *contra* the brain-in-vat radical skeptical scenario (i.e., that one is currently envatted on Mars being "fed" one's experiences by supercomputers), that the technology doesn't yet exist and hence the scenario is far-fetched. After all, one's beliefs about the current state of technology are also being produced via the supercomputers!¹⁰

This is not the case when it comes to local error-possibilities. Imagine that I think I see a zebra before me at the zoo, in conditions that appear absolutely normal. You now come along and ask me how I know that it's not a cleverly disguised mule, which is indistinguishable, to the untrained eye (and without conducting special checks, such as for paint), from a real live zebra. In this case, I am perfectly entitled to appeal to my background knowledge to form a view about the plausibility or otherwise of this error-possibility. (Why would the zoo do such a thing? How could they hope to get away with? Wouldn't such a deception be expensive? And so on). In the process I could certainly marshal sufficient evidence to make it rational for me to dismiss this error-possibility and maintain my belief that there is a zebra.¹¹

This is why it is very important to local error-possibilities how they are rationally motivated. In contrast, radical skeptical error-possibilities are not rationally motivated at all, since that would clearly be self-defeating. Instead, they are merely presented. The same strategy is not very effective with a localized error-possibility. Take the scenario we described above in support of religious skepticism, whereby there was no God but one believed that there was due to the interference of the scientists. If this is merely presented, then it ought to be easy for the defender of religious belief to rationally dismiss it. After all, their evidence in general is not being called into question, and no rational motivation has been presented for this error-possibility, so surely the rational thing to do is to appeal to one's background knowledge and argue that this error-possibility is simply far-fetched. As in the zebra case just described, it hardly matters that one cannot distinguish actual conditions from this skeptical scenario, since that in itself doesn't prevent one from being able to know that one is not the victim of such a scenario, and thus retain (for all has been shown to the contrary anyway) one's rational belief in God's existence.

So unlike the radical skeptic, then, the religious skeptic needs to be able to rationally motivate their local error-possibilities. This means that it is crucially important how they supplement their underdetermination- or closure-based religious skepticism with further claims that can play this role – for example, the idea that any explanation of one's evidence that appeals to God will always be rationally deficient when compared

with one that appeals only to more mundane features of the causal order. But the worry then is that it is really these further claims that are carrying the dialectical load in the argument, in which case what is added by constructing a case for (3) that also goes via an underdetermination- or closure-based argument?

Other Problems with the Master Argument

One can also object to the master argument from skepticism to atheism by questioning premises in that argument other than (3). For example, *reformed epistemology* will object to (2), and claim that it can be rational to believe certain propositions even if one lacks sufficient evidence in this regard. More precisely, they will contend that there can be basic beliefs, including basic religious beliefs (such as a belief in God's existence) that can be rationally held even in the absence of supporting evidence (or, at least, supporting evidence of a certain kind anyway; the reason for this *caveat* will become apparent presently). In order to see why reformed epistemologists make this kind of move, we need to first notice that it is a common feature of basic belief across a range of non-religious domains that it lacks evidence of the kind that is being demanded of basic religious belief. The rationality of one's perceptual beliefs, for example, presupposes a general commitment to the reliability of perception, but one has no non-circular evidential basis for that commitment at all (in that we calibrate our perceptual beliefs by appeal to other perceptual beliefs). And yet no one bar radical skeptics thinks that there is a standing challenge to the rationality of religious belief as a result of this fact. So unless religious skepticism is to collapse into an appeal to radical skepticism – which, as we noted above, would severely mitigate against its philosophical import – then we should be suspicious about this way of expressing religious skepticism.¹²

More positively, reformed epistemologists claim that just as basic perceptual belief can be rationally held even in the absence of supporting evidence – or, at least, *independent* (i.e., non-perceptual) supporting evidence anyway, such as an *a priori* defense of the reliability of perception – so basic religious belief, such as belief in the existence of God, can be rationally held even in the absence of independent (i.e., non-religious) supporting evidence. Indeed, they claim that one can account for the rationality of basic religious belief along the same lines contemporary epistemologists offer for basic perceptual belief. In the latter case, the contemporary rationale is that so long as one's perceptual faculties are functioning appropriately within conditions that are suitable for their application, then one's basic perceptual beliefs can be rational even if one lacks an independent evidential basis for them. Similarly, argue reformed epistemologists, so long as one's religious faculty – the *sensus divinitatis* – is functioning appropriately within conditions that are suitable for its application, then one's basic religious beliefs can be rational even if one lacks an independent evidential basis for them. Of course, the atheist won't accept that there is any faculty of this kind, and so will be skeptical of this argument. But the point is that their opponents have appealed to a style of epistemological reasoning that is usually held to be entirely appropriate with regard to certain kinds of non-religious belief, so what is to prevent them from employing this style of reasoning in defense of religious belief?¹³

Another potential weak spot in the master argument is the transition from (6) to (7). Even if it is granted that one ought not to have theistic religious conviction, why should this entail that one should be an atheist? In particular, rather than positively endorsing atheism, why not instead suspend belief about *both* the existence *and* the nonexistence of God and hence opt for *agnosticism*?

Answering this question demands that we determine what the default position is in this regard – is it agnosticism or atheism? Proponents of the latter often take it as read that if one takes oneself to lack a sufficient rational basis for supposing that something exists, that then entails that one is committed to supposing that it doesn't exist. If that were true, then the transition from (6) to (7) would be straightforward. There are grounds to doubt this reasoning, however. One can imagine a conscientious scientist who recognizes that she lacks a sufficient rational basis for supposing that some theoretical entity exists – the Higgs boson, say – but who would not thereby hold that she is committed to it not existing. If the best-supported scientific theory available suggests that this theoretical entity exists, then from a scientific point of view one is rational to accept its existence as a good working posit, even if one lacks a rational basis sufficient to support belief in its existence.¹⁴

Why couldn't the same be true of one's commitment in God, such that one could accept (6) while rejecting (7)? That is, one grants, in line with (6), that since one lacks an adequate rational basis for believing in God's existence it follows that one ought not to have religious conviction (i.e., one ought not to believe that God exists). But one does not thereby also endorse (7), since rather than embrace atheism, one instead maintains one's general acceptance of the claim that God exists, albeit while recognizing that it lacks the kind of epistemic pedigree that would be required of a rational belief.

Note that the proposal just sketched would be a very weak form of agnosticism. What makes it a form of agnosticism at all is that it doesn't involve either the belief that God exists or the belief that God doesn't exist. Nonetheless, it does involve a general acceptance of the claim that God exists, and hence this is a very minimal form of agnosticism. The point is that if we can make sense of such a minimal form of agnosticism getting in the way of the transition from (6) to (7), then it may be even easier to imagine a more standard form of agnosticism – one which doesn't even involve an acceptance of God's existence – blocking this transition. In particular, if one holds that suspension of belief is the default position to take on the existence of something when evidence is lacking – as opposed to belief that it doesn't exist – then it will be very natural to suppose that the right conclusion to derive from (6) is not atheism but rather agnosticism.

One way of approaching this last issue is by considering whether a lack of evidence that something exists is evidence that it doesn't exist (as the matter is sometimes put: is absence of evidence, evidence of absence?). If I am looking for something – empirical data suggesting the existence of phlogiston, say – and find that, time and again, it cannot be found, then over time we will take that as evidence that it simply doesn't exist. That is, the best explanation of why evidence of existence cannot be found starts to be that there is nothing to find in the first place.

Crucially, however, the evidential debate about the existence of God is not really analogous to the kind of scenario just described. After all, there are many parties to the debate who claim to have overwhelming evidence that the item in question – God – exists. Of course, it is evidence that won't be accepted by all parties, and so may be thought

epistemically deficient in at least some respects, but that's not yet to say that it isn't *bona fide* evidence regardless. It is, at the very least, evidence that many other people – who otherwise seem entirely reasonable in their beliefs – hold that God exists and that they have evidence in support of this claim. With that in mind, wouldn't the rational thing to do to suspend belief in the existence of God, rather than form the belief that God doesn't exist?

What about premises (1) and (5)? Can they be objected to? In the next section, we will be exploring this question as a way of introducing fideistic responses to religious skepticism. As we will see, this discussion will also expose a further reason to query the transition from (6) to (7).

Fideism and Quasi-Fideism

One might be wary of (5) on the grounds that there are other ways of evaluating the propriety of a belief than via exclusively rational means. Perhaps some beliefs have a prudential value, for example. Indeed, even an atheist might be willing to grant that there might be some comfort in believing in God's existence, even if this belief is false. I don't think this line of argument is very compelling, however, since the "should" in play in (5) is clearly one that specifically concerns rationality. That is, even if one's belief has prudential value, if it is not rationally held then, from a rational point of view, it should not be held at all.¹⁵

Still, one might respond by arguing that once the "should" is understood in this restrictive fashion, then it now follows that employing (5), in conjunction with (1), to motivate (6) leads to a very specific rendering of (6). Indeed, what we in fact get is this more specific claim:

(6*) Therefore, one should not, from a purely rational point of view, have theistic religious conviction. (From (1), (5).)

The problem with (6*), however, is that it doesn't seem to obviously entail (7). In particular, there is a certain way of thinking about theistic religious conviction – *fideism* – which contends that we should not evaluate such conviction in rational terms at all, since it is rather a matter of faith.¹⁶ Such a proposal can entirely accept (6*), but will argue that (7) doesn't follow from it.

Interestingly, one might also appeal to fideism to motivate a rejection of premise (1). The notion of "belief" is used by philosophers in a wide range of ways. Sometimes it can just mean a general endorsement of a proposition, but other times it can mean something much more specific, such as that particular propositional attitude which is a constituent part of rationally grounded knowledge.¹⁷ The latter is arguably what epistemologists have in mind when they talk about belief, and it is also plausibly that sense of belief that is in play when we are discussing the rationality of belief. On this construal of the notion, however, it is far from clear that religious conviction is best thought of as a belief. After all, beliefs in this sense have some basic connections to reasons and truth. For example, if one recognizes that one has little or no rational basis for thinking that *p* is true, and yet one is wholeheartedly committed to its truth nonetheless, then one's

propositional attitude to p it is not a believing in this sense. It may be a wishful thinking, for example, or – and I think this is the propositional attitude that is more salient for our purposes – an article of faith, but it is not a belief.

If that's right, then the fideist – who holds that religious conviction is a matter of faith as opposed to (epistemic) rationality – will be well-placed to reject (1) (perhaps in addition to holding that (6*) doesn't entail (7)). Moreover, notice that fideism is in effect a kind of skeptical solution to our skeptical challenge. Whereas other responses try to block the puzzle on epistemic grounds, and thereby demonstrate that religious belief is entirely in order as it is, fideism instead effectively concedes that an epistemic basis for religious conviction is lacking, but nonetheless presses the thought that such conviction is not thereby illegitimate.

Fideism of this general kind is often attributed to the later Wittgenstein,¹⁸ but I want to close by considering a different way of reading Wittgenstein's remarks on faith and reason, since this suggests an even more radical – and arguably even more skepticism-friendly – way of thinking about fideism. This reading specifically concerns Wittgenstein's (1969) remarks on the structure of rational evaluation in his final notebooks, published as *On Certainty*, remarks that were arguably inspired to a large extent by the writings of John Henry Newman.¹⁹

In this work, Wittgenstein argues for a radical new conception of the structure of rational evaluation. According to Wittgenstein, all rational evaluation takes place relative to background hinge commitments. These hinge commitments cannot themselves be subject to rational evaluation, since they are what enables rational evaluation to take place. As such, they are completely arationally held. Indeed, Wittgenstein repeatedly emphasizes the “visceral” and “animal” nature of these commitments, which are not to be thought of as subject to the realm of reason. One upshot of the Wittgensteinian account of the structure of rational evaluation is that all rational evaluations are essentially local, in that the attempt to rationally evaluate all of one's commitments (i.e., including one's hinge commitments) is simply incoherent. It thus follows that traditional attempts at universal rational evaluations, whether negative (i.e., radically skeptical) or positive (i.e., traditional anti-skeptical proposals), are to be rejected out of hand.²⁰

Wittgenstein is thus offering a conception of the structure of rational evaluation such that at the heart of all rational evaluation are basic arational commitments our conviction in which is more a matter of faith than belief (at least on the restricted conception of belief described above, which is the one that interests us). The relevance of this idea to our current concerns becomes apparent once we note the application to religious belief. This is where the parallels with Newman (1979) become apparent. Newman famously argued in defense of the rationality of religious belief by appeal to an ingenious kind of epistemic parity argument. Unlike the epistemic parity arguments that we saw being offered by reformed epistemologists above, however, which purport to show that our religious beliefs are epistemically on a par with an everyday class of belief (such as perceptual belief) that enjoys a privileged epistemic status, Newman took a very different approach. He conceded that the religious believer has, at root, a set of basic arational religious commitments. But he claimed that this does not expose religious belief to any particular epistemic censure since *all* belief – even the kind of everyday beliefs that we take to be properly held, if any beliefs are – presuppose basic

arational commitments. Here is a famous passage from *Grammar of Assent*: “None of us can think or act without the acceptance of truths, not intuitive, not demonstrated, yet sovereign” (Newman 1979, p. 150).

Newman’s epistemic parity argument thus doesn’t proceed by arguing that religious belief is analogous to everyday belief in being fully rationally grounded, but rather contends that religious belief is analogous to everyday belief in having arational commitments at its core. Still, the conclusion of the epistemic parity argument goes through – viz., that religious belief is immune to epistemic censure in at least this regard, since it is no less rationally grounded than everyday belief that is regarded as properly held.

The key difference between Newman and Wittgenstein is one of emphasis, in that whereas the latter is primarily interested in the role that our arational hinge commitments play in our system of belief more generally, Newman is primarily interested to draw out the implications of this thought for the rationality of religious belief in particular. Still, it is clear that Wittgenstein is concerned with the implications of the conception of the structure of rational evaluation that he offers for religious belief, since throughout *On Certainty* he returns to consider ramifications of his account for this specific domain.

While the account of the rationality of religious belief that results shares some features with standard forms of fideism, it also diverges from it in fundamental ways, which is why the Wittgenstein–Newman position has been referred to in the literature as *quasi-fideism*.²¹ In particular, while both standard fideism and quasi-fideism hold that religious conviction is at root a matter of faith rather than (epistemically assessable) belief, quasi-fideism departs from fideism in holding that religious belief in general can be as rationally held as everyday (non-hinge) belief in general might be. There is thus no need, on this proposal, to treat religious belief as being of a different epistemic kind to belief in general. The thought is that just as everyday beliefs concerning specific matters – e.g., where one’s car is currently parked – can be rationally held in the normal way, even though such a system of rationality presupposes arational hinge commitments (e.g., that there is even an external world at all), so one can rationally hold specific religious beliefs – e.g., about the religious import of a certain piece of scripture – even though such a system of religious rationality presupposes specifically arational religious hinge commitments (e.g., that there is a God, that there can be miracles, and so on).

Notice too how quasi-fideism – perhaps even more so than standard fideism – incorporates skeptical trains of thought. After all, on this view there are clear limitations to rationality, in that the aspiration for a fully general rational vindication of one’s beliefs, including one’s religious beliefs, is simply unavailable. It is crucial to emphasize, however, that this limitation – if Wittgenstein is correct anyway – is necessary rather than contingent. That is, it is not as if had we been cleverer, more imaginative, more thorough in our inquiries and so on, that we would have been able to undertake such fully general rational evaluations. Rather, they are as incoherent as circle-squares. We are thus led, via a kind of skepticism about the universality of rational evaluation, to a way of thinking about rational belief that lends itself to the general rationality of religious conviction.²² Surprisingly, we thus find skepticism, of a sort anyway, motivating not atheism, but rather theism.

Notes

- 1 Note that what we will not be examining here is the rich history of philosophical engagement between skepticism, atheism, and religious belief, since that would take us too far afield.
- 2 Though note that this formulation of an evidentialist basis for skepticism about the rationality of religious belief lacks one key ingredient found in classical – i.e., Lockean – formulations of evidentialism, which is the extent to which the evidence one has must be proportionate to one's level of conviction (and hence very high in the case of religious belief). For a discussion of Lockean evidentialism and its potential to motivate skepticism about the rationality of religious belief, see Pritchard (2003). Note also that generally I am disinclined to express skeptical arguments in terms of evidence, but rather prefer the more specific category of *reasons*, which I think is a better way of getting a handle on our intuitions in this regard. But since most epistemology of religious belief tends to focus on evidence, I will follow suit.
- 3 One finds underdetermination principles of this general kind regularly presented as part of skeptical arguments. For some examples, see Yalçın (1992), Brueckner (1994), Cohen (1998), Vogel (2004), and Pritchard (2005a).
- 4 Such a restriction on the nature of religious evidence would be, of course, highly controversial. For example, Plantinga (2000, pp. 450–451) offers an interesting example where a subject can both recognize that the evidence, objectively speaking, suggests that not-*p*, and yet has an adequate subjective evidential basis for believing that *p* regardless. The example concerns something that has been stolen, and an agent who is widely known to be a thief. Moreover, all the evidence suggests that he took the item in question (he was in the right place at the right time, had a motive, etc.). The accused agent might recognize that the evidence, objectively understood, is massively against him and yet nonetheless know full well, on the basis of his own subjective evidence (i.e., his personal experience), that he did not, on this occasion anyway, steal anything. In such a scenario, the rational thing to do is to believe in accordance with one's subjective evidence rather than the evidence objectively conceived. The parallel with the "evidence" of religious experience in this scenario should be obvious.
- 5 For more on the logical relationship between underdetermination- and closure-based skeptical arguments, see Brueckner (1994), Cohen (1998), and Pritchard (2005a; 2005b, Part I; 2015a, Part I).
- 6 Actually, this formulation is not quite right as it stands. I might have overwhelming evidence that suggests that the playing card before me is either a king or a queen of hearts, and on that basis arguably have evidence that suffices to make it rational to believe that it is a queen of hearts (i.e., given that this evidence excludes so many other alternatives). But clearly I do not have an evidential basis that makes it rational to believe that the card before me is not a king of hearts, even know I know that if the card before me is a queen of hearts then that entails that it is not a king of hearts. Even so, this formulation should suffice for our modest purposes here. For a discussion of closure-style epistemic principles, and how best to formulate them to serve skeptical purposes, see Pritchard (2015a: Part I).
- 7 See Tooley (2015) for an excellent survey of the literature on the problem of evil.
- 8 See, for example, Schellenberg (2013). See also the growing literature on evolutionary debunking arguments against religious belief which appeals to a broadly similar kind of argument. This literature is nicely surveyed in Wielenberg (2016).
- 9 In the contemporary literature on radical skepticism, the skeptical problem is almost exclusively formulated in terms of one or both of these principles. For discussion, see Pritchard (2015a, Part I).
- 10 That is not to say that one can never have evidence against a radical skeptical scenario. For example, some have argued that we can have abductive grounds to dismiss them (e.g., Vogel 1990), while others have suggested that we might have a factive rational basis to

dismiss them (e.g., Pritchard 2008; 2012). The point is just that it is far more problematic to suppose that this is possible with regard to radical skeptical scenarios than with local skeptical scenarios.

- 11 Interestingly, this point is often missed, since commentators focus on the fact that one cannot *perceptually* distinguish between the zebra and the cleverly disguised mule (unlike, say, a zoologist would). But as our discussion indicates, one can, by appeal to one's background knowledge, rationally form a view as to why an error-possibility should be dismissed even if one lacks this discriminative capacity. For more on this point – and the distinction between what I call *favoring* as opposed to *discriminating* evidence that underlies it – see Pritchard (2010).
- 12 This is what is known as a “parity argument.” One argues that the form of reasoning behind religious skepticism would be just as applicable to other forms of belief that, radical skepticism aside, are thought to be entirely in order, from a rational point of view. Given that religious skepticism is meant to be specific to the domain of religious belief, and so ought not to collapse into a general radical skepticism, this significantly undermines its philosophical import. For more discussion of parity arguments in the context of reformed epistemology, see Plantinga (1983; 2000) and Alston (1991).
- 13 Another route to denying (2) is offered by Zagzebski (2010, p. 396). She makes the interesting point that treating belief in God's existence as somehow epistemically foundational to religious belief – in the sense that one needs to establish the rationality of this belief before one can defend the rationality of religious belief in general (such that if one fails in this task then a general religious skepticism follows) – is in fact to get things entirely the wrong way around. She claims, in contrast, that the more specific religious beliefs that one holds – for example, regarding certain religious experiences – can in fact be rationally held independently of the rational basis of one's belief in God's existence, such that these more specific religious beliefs can ultimately form the rational basis for one's belief in God's existence.
- 14 See van Fraassen (1980) for an influential defense, as part of his wider defense of constructive empiricism in the philosophy of science, of an account of scientific acceptance in theoretical claims, as opposed to scientific belief, that is along these lines.
- 15 For similar reasons, I don't think it is relevant to our assessment of (5) that it may in practice be impossible for those with religious conviction to shake their belief in God's existence.
- 16 For an excellent recent survey of philosophical work on fideism, see Amesbury (2016).
- 17 See Stevenson (2002) for a useful taxonomy of different uses of the notion of belief in the philosophical literature.
- 18 See especially Wittgenstein (1966). For two key discussions of a straightforward Wittgensteinian fideism, see Nielsen (1967) and Phillips (1976).
- 19 See especially Newman (1979). For defenses of the parallels between Wittgenstein's account of the structure of rational evaluation in *On Certainty* and the views defended by Newman, see Kienzler (2006) and Pritchard (2015b).
- 20 For some key contemporary interpretations of a Wittgenstein hinge epistemology, see Williams (1991), Wright (2004), Moyal-Sharrock (2004), Pritchard (2012; 2015a; 2018), Coliva (2015), and Schönbaumsfeld (2016). For two surveys of contemporary work on hinge epistemology, see Pritchard (2011; 2017a).
- 21 I introduced this nomenclature in Pritchard (2011). For further discussion of quasi-fideism, so conceived, see Pritchard (2015b; 2017b; forthcoming).
- 22 Thanks to Graham Oppy for comments on an earlier version of this chapter.

References

- Alston, W. (1982) "Religious experience and religious belief." *Noûs* 16: 3–12.
- Amesbury, R. (2016) "Fideism." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/fideism/> (accessed 17 September 2018).
- Brueckner, A. (1994) "The structure of the sceptical argument." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 54: 827–835.
- Cohen, S. (1998) "Two kinds of sceptical argument." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 58: 143–159.
- Coliva, A. (2015) *Extended Rationality: A Hinge Epistemology*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kienzler, W. (2006) "Wittgenstein and John Henry Newman on certainty." *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 71: 117–138.
- Moyal-Sharrock, D. (2004) *Understanding Wittgenstein's On Certainty*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Newman, J. (1979) *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press. Original work published 1870.
- Nielsen, K. (1967) "Wittgensteinian fideism." *Philosophy* 42: 237–254.
- Phillips, D. (1976) *Religion without Explanation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Plantinga, A. (1983) "Reason and belief in God," in A. Plantinga and N. Wolterstorff (eds.) *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, pp. 16–93.
- Plantinga, A. (2000) *Warranted Christian Belief*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pritchard, D. (2003) "Reforming reformed epistemology," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 43: 43–66.
- Pritchard, D. (2005a) "The structure of sceptical arguments." *Philosophical Quarterly* 55: 37–52.
- Pritchard, D. (2005b) *Epistemic Luck*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pritchard, D. (2008) "Certainty and acceptionism." *Noûs* 18: 58–67.
- Pritchard, D. (2010) "Relevant alternatives, perceptual knowledge, and discrimination." *Noûs* 44: 245–268.
- Pritchard, D. (2011) "Wittgenstein on scepticism," in O. Kuusela and M. McGinn (eds.) *Oxford Handbook on Wittgenstein*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 521–547.
- Pritchard, D. (2012) "Wittgenstein and the groundlessness of our believing." *Synthese* 189: 255–272.
- Pritchard, D. (2015a) *Epistemic Angst: Radical Scepticism and the Groundlessness of Our Believing*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Pritchard, D. (2015b) "Wittgenstein on faith and reason: The influence of Newman," in M. Szatkowski (ed.) *God, Truth and Other Enigmas*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 141–164.
- Pritchard, D. (2017a) "Wittgenstein on hinge commitments and radical scepticism in *On Certainty*," in H-J. Glock and J. Hyman (eds.) *Blackwell Companion to Wittgenstein*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 563–575.
- Pritchard, D. (2017b) "Faith and reason." *Religious Epistemology* 81: 110–118.
- Pritchard, D. (2018) "Epistemic angst." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 96: 70–90.
- Pritchard, D. (forthcoming) "Quasi-fideism and religious conviction," in M. Szatkowski (ed.) *Epistemology of Religious Belief*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Schellenberg, J. (2013) "Religious diversity and religious scepticism," in K. Schilbrack (ed.) *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Religious Diversity*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Schönbaumsfeld, G. (2016) *The Illusion of Doubt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Stevenson, L. (2002) "Six levels of mentality." *Philosophical Explorations* 5: 105–124.
- Tooley, M. (2015) "The problem of evil." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/evil/> (accessed 17 November 2018).
- Van Fraassen, B. (1980) *The Scientific Image*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Vogel, J. (1990) "Cartesian scepticism and inference to the best explanation." *Journal of Philosophy* 87: 658–666.
- Vogel, J. (2004) "Sceptical arguments." *Philosophical Issues* 14: 426–455.
- Wielenberg, E. (2016) "Evolutionary debunking arguments in religion and morality," in U. Leibowitz and N. Sinclair (eds.) *Explanation in Ethics and Mathematics: Debunking and Dispensability*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 83–102.
- Williams, M. (1991) *Unnatural Doubts: Epistemological Realism and the Basis of Scepticism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1966) *Wittgenstein's Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, ed. C. Barrett. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1969) *On Certainty*, trans. D. Paul and G. Anscombe, ed. G. Anscombe and G. von Wright. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wright, C. (2004) "Warrant for nothing (and foundations for free)?" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 78 (suppl.): 167–212.
- Yalçın, Ü. (1992) "Sceptical arguments from underdetermination." *Philosophical Studies* 68: 1–34.
- Zagzebski, L. (2010) "Religious knowledge," in S. Bernecker and D. Pritchard (eds.) *Routledge Companion to Epistemology*. London: Routledge, pp. 393–400.

Methods of Science

ELLIOTT SOBER

The idea that scientific results might support or inform atheism is familiar, but the question whether the methods of science lead to atheism may seem peculiar. It sounds a bit like asking whether deductive logic has consequences for whether God exists. Deductive logic is a neutral tool for reasoning. If “God exists” were a logical truth or a contradiction, logic could tell you whether theism or atheism is true. But “God exists” is neither, which means that logic has nothing to say about this.

I think this analogy with deductive logic is misleading. Normative philosophical theories about the methods of science often *do* have implications about whether atheism is true. After reviewing a few of those theories, and explaining what implications they have for theism and atheism, I’ll argue that those theories are unsatisfactory. Then, I’ll describe a view about the methods of science that I find congenial, and describe the implications it has about the three-way contest among atheism, theism, and agnosticism.

Logical Positivism

A cornerstone of logical positivism is the testability theory of meaning (sometimes called “verificationism”). It asserts that a statement is meaningful precisely when it is empirically testable. Hans Hahn, Otto Neurath, and Rudolf Carnap, three prominent members of the Vienna Circle, described how this theory applies to the statement “God exists” in their 1929 manifesto, *The Scientific World Conception*:

If someone asserts “there is a God?” ... we do not say to him “what you say is false”; but we ask him, “what do you mean ...?” Then it appears that there is a sharp boundary between two kinds of statements. To one belong statements as they are made by empirical science; their meaning can be determined by logical analysis or, more precisely, through reduction to the simplest statements about the empirically given. The other statements, to which

belong those cited above, reveal themselves as empty of meaning if one takes them in the way that metaphysicians intend. ... The metaphysician and the theologian believe, thereby misunderstanding themselves, that their statements say something, or that they denote a state of affairs. Analysis, however, shows that these statements say nothing but merely express a certain mood and spirit. (Hahn, Neurath, and Carnap 1973)

The positivists¹ were well aware that what they say about “God exists” also applies to “God does not exist”; both are meaningless because both are untestable. If the positivists are right, atheism isn’t true, and neither is theism. However, the positivists are wrong; the testability theory of meaning is untenable. It is a mistake to equate testability with meaningfulness.² The sentence “undetectable entities exist” is untestable, but it is not meaningless gibberish. We know which statements it entails and which entail it; this is a sign that we understand what the sentence means. Indeed, we wouldn’t be able to say that the sentence is untestable if we didn’t know what it means.³ The testability theory of meaning makes a second mistake, which derives from its failure to consider Duhem’s thesis. Pierre Duhem (1914) argued that physical theories never make observational predictions on their own; they generate predictions only when supplemented with “auxiliary assumptions.” Quine (1953) generalized Duhem’s point, arguing that all theories have this character, not just theories in physics. The Duhem/Quine thesis is a problem for the testability theory of meaning. Maybe it’s true that T&A is testable even though T, taken on its own, is not. In contrast, it can’t be true that T&A is meaningful while T is not. Meaningfulness is *compositional*; a sequence of symbols is meaningful only if each of the symbols in the sequence is.

Quine’s generalized thesis applies to the question of whether “God exists” is testable. It isn’t testable on its own; rather, you need to see whether it has testable consequences when it is conjoined with auxiliary assumptions. Here is a possible auxiliary assumption that does the trick:

If God exists, there should be much less suffering in the world than there now is.

Atheists often accept this auxiliary assumption and use it to argue that theism is refuted by the quantity of suffering that the world contains. If they are right, “God exists” is testable, given an auxiliary assumption that atheists are often happy to embrace.

Empiricism

Empiricism is an *ism* with many meanings. Here I want to consider a version of empiricism that says that it is irrational to believe a proposition if it isn’t a deductive consequence of statements that are strictly about observable entities.⁴ If God is a being we cannot directly observe, and if the existence of God is logically consistent with what we do observe, then the empiricist concludes that we should be agnostics, not atheists or theists. But as before, the correct reaction to this argument is to reject its starting assumption. The empiricism just described is flawed. Although the existence of unobservable entities cannot be deduced from what we observe, we often have excellent evidence that this or that unobservable exists. True, electrons cannot be observed with

the naked eye because they are too small, while dinosaurs count as observables because we would see them with the naked eye were we in the right place and time. But that is not a good reason to be skeptical about the existence of electrons (Sober 2010).

Inference to the Best Explanation and Bayesianism

The idea of inference to the best explanation (IBE) has been developed in different ways. The version I want to consider takes its cue from Harman (1965):

In making ... [an inference to the best explanation,] one infers, from the fact that a certain hypothesis would explain the evidence, to the truth of that hypothesis. In general, there will be several hypotheses which might explain the evidence, so one must be able to reject all such alternative hypotheses before one is warranted in making the inference. Thus one infers, from the premise that a given hypothesis would provide a “better” explanation for the evidence than would any other hypothesis, to the conclusion that the given hypothesis is true. (Harman 1965, p. 89)

Does Harman mean that we need to consider all the *available* explanations, or that we need to survey all *possible* explanations? The latter demand seems quixotic; rarely, if ever, can we be confident that there are no possible explanations of the evidence at hand beyond those that we have before us. I’ll set that worry aside and take Harman to be saying that we should accept an explanation if it is the best of those currently available. I am especially interested in what IBE says when there is only one available explanation. In that case, IBE instructs us to accept that explanation.

Lycan (1988, p. 129), Josephson and Josephson (1994, p. 5), and Psillos (2002, p. 614) schematize IBE as follows:

F is a set of facts. H, if true, would explain F. No other hypothesis can explain F as well as H does. Therefore, H is probably true.

Salmon (2001, pp. 85–86) criticized IBE, thus construed, by pointing out that it sanctions the acceptance of H even when H, if true, would provide a terrible explanation of F. Lipton (2001, pp. 104–105) responded by modifying the above schema so that the second premise says that H, if true, would explain F “sufficiently well.” This, of course, raises the question of how quality of explanation is to be assessed and what determines how good is good enough.

That question to one side, how does IBE bear on the question of theism versus atheism? Atheists might use IBE to argue that the existence and quantity of suffering in our world is a datum that requires explanation, that the best explanation of that fact is that there is no God, and conclude that atheism is probably true. Theists, besides seeking a reply to this argument, might launch an IBE argument that leads to a theistic conclusion. Here’s an example: By definition, a law of nature is fundamental if and only if it can’t be explained by any other law. If there are no “explanatory loops” (wherein A explains itself, or A explains B which in turn explains A, etc.), and if there are finitely many laws of nature, then there must be at least one law that is fundamental. Let’s suppose that

there are several fundamental laws. An IBE argument might then be formulated: These laws can be explained by the hypothesis that God exists and chooses these laws to be the ones that will govern our universe, and this is the best (maybe the only) explanation of why those laws are true. The conclusion is then drawn that theism is probably true.

I think that both these arguments are unsatisfactory. This is because the IBE schema described above is flawed. Even if God’s existing and wanting to make law L true would *thoroughly* explain why law L holds, that wouldn’t be enough to show that the God hypothesis is probably true. The same goes for the atheist’s IBE argument: even if the nonexistence of God would *thoroughly* explain why there is so much evil, that wouldn’t be enough to show that atheism is probably true. This point can be made clear by considering how the odds formulation of Bayes’s theorem applies to the bearing of evidence E and on theism and atheism:

$$\frac{\Pr(\text{God exists} \mid E)}{\Pr(\text{God does not exist} \mid E)} = \frac{\Pr(E \mid \text{God exists})}{\Pr(E \mid \text{God does not exist})} = \frac{\Pr(\text{God exists})}{\Pr(\text{God does not exist})}$$

In the terminology that is now standard, this equation says that the ratio of posterior probabilities equals the ratio of likelihoods multiplied by the ratio of prior probabilities. The posterior probability of “God exists” is the probability it has, conditional on E’s being true; the likelihood of “God exists” is the probability of E, given that hypothesis. This equation makes it clear that if you want to claim that E makes atheism more probable than theism (or that the opposite is true), you need to say something about the prior probabilities of the two hypotheses. Also note that the word “explains” does not occur in this equation. Instead of asking you to consider how well theism (or atheism) would explain E if theism (or atheism) were true, the equation asks you to consider how probable E is, given theism and given atheism.⁵

What can be said of the prior probabilities of theism and atheism – that is, the probabilities that each hypothesis has before the relevant observations are taken into account? It is tempting to invoke the principle of indifference to answer this question. Consider a set of propositions that are exclusive and exhaustive – one of them must be true, and each is incompatible with every other. The principle says that if you have no reason to think that one of those propositions is more probable than any other, you should assign them equal probabilities. If the set consists of the two propositions <God exists, God does not exist>, the principle entails that $\Pr(\text{God exists}) = \frac{1}{2}$. And if the set consists of <The Christian God exists, A non-Christian God exists, No God exists>, the principle says that $\Pr(\text{God exists}) = \frac{2}{3}$. There are many ways to slice the cake; choosing one of them is arbitrary and embracing all of them leads to contradiction. And so the principle of indifference is of no help in assigning prior probabilities to these hypotheses.

Swinburne (2004, pp. 93–109) comes at the problem of priors from a different angle. He says that the God hypothesis is simple, and that it is good scientific practice to give simpler hypotheses higher prior probabilities than hypotheses that are more complex. If there are just two alternatives – either God exists or there is no such being – and if theism is a simpler hypothesis than atheism, then Swinburne’s view of science entails that the prior probability of theism is greater than $\frac{1}{2}$.⁶ Although there is a tradition in

philosophy of probability of arguing that simpler hypotheses should be given higher prior probabilities, I, like many others, think that that line of argument has been a failure (Sober 2015). Also, with respect to Swinburne's claim that the God hypothesis is simple, it is worth considering the idea that atheism is simpler than theism in the sense that theism postulates an entity that atheism razors away. I'll discuss Ockham's razor later.

For myself, I see no way to justify an assignment of prior probability to "God exists." My point is not just that no point value can be justified. My claim is that assigning an interval (short of saying that its probability is somewhere between 0 and 1) is unjustifiable. This cuts both ways: it is a problem for theists who want to argue that what we observe shows that God probably exists and also for atheists who want to argue that what we observe shows that God probably does not.

My skepticism about prior probabilities is not limited to theology. I feel the same way about "big" scientific theories. There are no defensible priors for Darwin's theory of evolution or for Einstein's general theory of relativity. This means that there are no defensible posterior probabilities, either. However, I do not claim that *all* prior probabilities are unknowable. Priors can sometimes be justified by frequency data. If you are a doctor in Wisconsin and Susan walks into your office to take a tuberculosis test, it is reasonable to use the frequency of tuberculosis in Wisconsin as your estimate of the prior probability that she has tuberculosis. Once you obtain the test result, you update your assignment of probability by using Bayes's theorem. God's existence isn't like this, and neither is Darwin's theory of evolution. We have no frequency data (or any other reasonable basis) that can be used to assign them prior probabilities.

The kind of Bayesianism I am using here is not subjectivist. Subjective Bayesianism says that we each should use our subjective degrees of certainty to assign prior probabilities. The problem with this version of Bayesianism is that prior and posterior probabilities have no probative force. You and I can have the same evidence and background knowledge and yet your prior for God's existing is low while mine is high, and there is no saying who is right. Subjective Bayesianism might work as a philosophy for individual actors; however, in the public sphere of scientific argumentation, the rules of the game are different. If the conclusion you draw in a scientific argument depends on an assignment of values to prior probabilities, you should be able to defend that assignment.

Hypothetico-Deductivism

As the name implies, hypothetico-deductivism is a non-probabilistic theory of scientific reasoning. It holds that scientific hypotheses have deductive consequences concerning what we should observe. If a hypothesis deductively entails that an observational proposition is true, and we observe that the proposition isn't true, we can deduce that the hypothesis is false. On the other hand, when the observational prediction turns out to be true, we can't deduce that the hypothesis is true. This is the logical difference between *modus tollens* (a valid form of deductive reasoning) and the fallacy of affirming the consequent. It is the foundation of Popper's 1959 thesis (Popper 2002) that scientific hypotheses are falsifiable, not verifiable.⁷

Many atheists think that the kinds and quantities of suffering that exist in our world deductively prove that God does not exist. This argument rests on the assumption that God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good (all-PKG). Take away that assumption and the proof of atheism collapses. The most that can be deduced is that there is no all-PKG being. That result leaves room for theisms of various sorts.

There is a deeper problem with the deductive version of “the argument from evil.” Even if you assume that God must be all-PKG, you still can’t validly deduce that there should be less suffering in the world than the amount you observe. The reason is this. If an argument from premises P to conclusion C is deductively valid, then the argument remains valid if you add any proposition A you please to the premises. The fancy word for this is that deductive validity is *monotonic*. With that in mind, consider the following three propositions:

- (P) God exists and is all-PKG.
- (A) God may have reasons of which we are unaware for permitting horrendous evils to exist.
- (E) There is much less evil in the world than what you observe.

P doesn’t deductively entail E because P&A doesn’t entail E (Plantinga 1974).

This point has led several philosophers to reformulate the argument from evil. Rather than claiming that the evils that exist in our world *prove* that an all-PKG God does not exist, they argue that those evils are *evidence against* the existence of such a God. This is the *eidential argument from evil*; for discussion, see the essays collected in Howard-Snyder (1996). This shift from proof to evidence brings me to the final theory of scientific reasoning I want to consider.

Contrastive Empiricism

I suggested above that objectively defensible prior probabilities for theism and atheism are not to be had, which means that there is no way to justify a claim about the posterior probabilities of those two hypotheses. Even so, there is something of value in the Bayesian framework. We often know which of two hypotheses has the higher likelihood, even when we are in the dark about prior and posterior probabilities. For example, Arthur Stanley Eddington’s observation of light bending in a solar eclipse was widely taken to be evidence favoring Einstein’s general theory of relativity over Newton’s theory. It is natural to understand this epistemic judgment in terms of a difference in likelihoods:

$$\Pr(O \mid \text{Einstein's theory}) > \Pr(O \mid \text{Newton's theory}).$$

By the same token, the evidential argument from evil can be formulated so that its conclusion is a likelihood inequality (Draper 1989):

$$\Pr(E \mid \text{God does not exist}) > \Pr(E \mid \text{God exists}).^8$$

Here E is a somewhat detailed description of the kinds and quantities of evil that exist, not the bland statement that some evils exist. For both Eddington's argument and the evidential argument from evil, the principle that describes the epistemic significance of likelihood differences is this (Hacking 1965):

The Law of Likelihood: Observation O favors hypothesis H1 over hypothesis H2 if and only if $\Pr(O|H1) > \Pr(O|H2)$.

The law, as stated, is qualitative; it gives no representation of *how much* O favors H1 over H2. A natural suggestion here is to use the likelihood ratio $\Pr(O|H1) > \Pr(OA|H2)$ to measure strength of favoring.

I want to use the law of likelihood to describe a philosophy of scientific inference that I have called "contrastive empiricism" (Sober 1990). This is the thesis that science is able to solve discrimination problems of empirically non-equivalent hypotheses, but is unable to do so when the hypotheses are empirically equivalent. The law of likelihood can be used to define the latter concept:

Hypotheses H1 and H2 are empirically equivalent if and only if, for any observation O,
 $\Pr(O|H1) = \Pr(O|H2)$.

The following six statements provide an example that illustrates what contrastive empiricism says and how it differs from the empiricism I described in Section 3:

(D1) Dinosaurs once roamed the earth.

(D2) The earth was never populated by dinosaurs.

(D3) Dinosaurs never existed, but all the evidence we could ever obtain will be as if dinosaurs existed.

(E1) Electrons exist.

(E2) Electrons do not exist.

(E3) Electrons do not exist, but all the evidence we could ever obtain will be as if electrons exist.

D1 is about observables, but E1 is not. Old-school empiricism makes a big deal out of this difference, claiming that we should never believe E1, regardless of how strong the evidence is, but that no such impediment stands in the way of believing D1. Contrastive empiricism claims that the observable/unobservable distinction is not epistemologically relevant, a point that many critics of old-school empiricism have made (see, e.g., Maxwell 1962). According to contrastive empiricism, the Ds resemble the Es in two respects. First, the problem of discriminating between D1 and D2 is scientifically solvable, as is the problem of discriminating between E1 and E2. Second, the problem of discriminating between D1 and D3 is not scientifically solvable, and neither is the problem of discriminating between E1 and E3. It doesn't matter that D1 is about an observable whereas E1 is not. Contrastive empiricism is a thesis about *discrimination problems*, not about *propositions* taken one at a time.

It sounds odd to say that science is incapable of discriminating between the 1s and the 3s. After all, the 1s are sensible but the 3s are crazy. This is obvious to civilians; are scientists incapable of seeing the obvious? I don't think they are. We *all* think the 3s are crazy. But in what does this craziness consist? I think that many scientists would regard the contrast between the 1s and the 3s as scientifically *pointless*. They might even say that comparing the 1s and the 3s is a "philosophical" problem, meaning that it is not *their* business (and perhaps implying that only a fool would spend time thinking about it). I think scientists are right to dismiss such problems. However, dismissing the problem as pointless is not the same as thinking that science provides a reason to think that the 1s are true and the 3s are false. It does not.

Although I have described contrastive empiricism by using the law of likelihood, the philosophy can be formulated in terms of different epistemological frameworks. For example, model selection criteria like the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) allow one to compare hypotheses in terms of their expected predictive accuracies. The law of likelihood is not part of AIC, but contrastive empiricism, spelled out in terms of AIC, will reach the conclusion I have already described: AIC cannot provide you with a reason for thinking that one hypothesis will be more predictively accurate than another, if the two hypotheses are predictively equivalent.

Contrastive empiricism is relevant to the question of atheism. There are versions of theism that make predictions that conflict with the predictions made by this or that scientific hypothesis. For example, Young Earth Creationism maintains that God created life on earth within the last 50,000 years or so. There is abundant evidence that life on earth is much older than that. The observational evidence strongly favors the hypothesis that life on earth began about 3.9 billion years ago over Young Earth Creationism. However, there are other versions of theism that avoid conflicting with science. Deism provides an old example. Deism says that God created the universe, chose the laws of nature, and then sat back and allowed natural processes to unfold according to natural laws. Deism denies that God intervenes in nature after the universe's first moment.⁹ If scientific theories describe what happens *in* nature, and say nothing about the *origin* of nature itself, then deism can't conflict with any scientific theory. No observation will ever show that deism is false. Or, to put the point contrastively, no observation will ever discriminate between science + deism and science + atheism. Contrastive empiricism favors agnosticism, not atheism, in this instance.

According to contrastive empiricism, one needs to distinguish the question of whether well-supported scientific theories contain metaphysical elements and the question of whether there is scientific evidence for those metaphysical elements. It may seem that the former entails the latter, the idea being that if evidence E provide strong support for theory T, and T entails metaphysical element M, then E provides strong support for M. However, it has long been understood that the underlying principle about evidence is mistaken.¹⁰ Here's a simple example that illustrates why: You are about to be dealt a card from a standard deck. The dealer is careless so you see that the card is red. This is evidence for the hypothesis that the card is the ace of hearts, not in the sense of proving that it is true, but in the sense of making it more plausible than it was before. The hypothesis that the card is the ace of hearts entails that the card is an ace. However, your observation that the card is red provides no evidence that the card is an ace.

Contrastive empiricism grants that scientific theories routinely deploy metaphysical assumptions. One of the most basic assumptions made by many scientific theories is that there exists a physical world outside of one's own mind. However, scientific theories don't provide *evidence* that physical objects exist. Rather, they *assume* that there are physical objects and then develop theories about what those objects are like. This is approximately the view that Carnap (1950) defended in his essay "Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology." Carnap talked about two types of existence claims; I prefer to talk about two types of discrimination problems. I also don't agree with Carnap's linguistic formulation of his epistemological point. For Carnap, the decision about whether to adopt a framework assumption like "physical objects exist" is the decision of which of several languages you are going to speak. I don't see things that way. I view languages as neutral vehicles for saying things. Deciding to assume that physical objects exist is to take a stance, which of course needs to be expressed in some language or other. English, like other languages, provides the resources for expressing this proposition, but it also provides the resources for expressing its negation. "Physical objects exist" and "physical objects do not exist" are both well-formed sentences of English.

It is easy to see how data can fail to confirm or disconfirm the metaphysical assumptions shared by competing scientific hypotheses. For example, if two astronomical theories agree that there are physical objects, but disagree about the characteristics those objects possess, then observational evidence may be able to discriminate between them without at the same time discriminating between the hypothesis that physical objects exist and the hypothesis that they do not. I hope you see how this point can also be made about the example from cards. The card's being red discriminates between the hypothesis that the card is a red queen and the hypothesis that it is a black queen, but does not discriminate between the hypothesis that the card is a queen and the hypothesis that it is a jack.

Ockham's Razor

It might be suggested that Ockham's razor, the principle of parsimony, is an important principle of scientific inference, and that it says that we should conclude that atheism is true and theism is false if both are compatible with everything we observe. In evaluating this parsimony argument for atheism, it is important to distinguish the razor of silence from the razor of denial. I hope it is obvious that a scientific proposition *P* will be more probable than the conjunction *P*&*G* (where *G* = God exists). Being silent about whether God exists makes what you believe more probable.¹¹ What is not obvious is that "science&atheism" is more probable than "science&theism." The razor of denial seems to favor the first conjunction, but this razor is puzzling in a way that the razor of silence is not. That does not mean that the razor of denial has no place in science. It does, but I think that Ockham's razor, properly understood, does not help you choose between empirically equivalent hypotheses. Part of my reason for saying this is that I am *reductionist* about parsimony. I think that parsimony is never an end in itself; parsimony is epistemically relevant only when it mirrors some more fundamental epistemic value.

I see three "parsimony paradigms" within which the fact that one hypothesis is more parsimonious than another can be epistemically relevant (Sober 2015). According to

the first, parsimony is relevant when there is a justification for assigning simpler theories higher prior probabilities. When medical students are cautioned not to “chase zebras,” the advice is often taken to be an instance of Ockham’s razor. If a patient’s symptoms can be explained by the hypothesis that he had common disease C, and also can be explained by the hypothesis that he had rare disease R, you should prefer the C diagnosis over the R. C is said to be the more parsimonious hypothesis. The frequency difference between C and R is a reasonable basis for assigning different prior probabilities. According to the second parsimony paradigm, parsimony can be epistemically relevant when simpler theories have higher likelihoods. When all the lights in your neighborhood go out at the same time, it is more parsimonious to think that this was due to a single power outage than to think that all the light bulbs happened to burn out simultaneously. Postulating a single common cause is more parsimonious than postulating a large number of independent, separate causes. With the right assumptions, the common cause model will make the observations more probable than the separate cause model will. According to the third paradigm, parsimony is epistemically relevant when the hypotheses being considered are models that contain adjustable parameters, and AIC is used to assess which models can be expected to make more accurate predictions; parsimony (as measured by the number of adjustable parameters) is provably relevant to that undertaking. None of these three justifications of Ockham’s razor allows one to discriminate between empirically equivalent hypotheses. I do not claim that these three paradigms are the end of the story. But as things now stand, I don’t think that Ockham’s razor, properly construed, provides a justification for preferring atheism over theism when the two are empirically equivalent.

Concluding Comment

Philosophical naturalism, in one of its guises, is the view that philosophical theories should be assessed by the same considerations that scientists ought to use in assessing scientific theories. In this chapter, I have traced out the implications of this view for atheism, agnosticism, and theism (which I think of as philosophical theories) by surveying several conceptions of how scientific reasoning ought to proceed. Logical empiricism proposed a criterion for what it takes for any sentence, regardless of its subject matter, to be meaningful. It does not exempt theism and atheism from its purview. The same holds true of inference to the best explanation, old-school empiricism, Bayesianism, hypothetico-deductivism, and contrastive empiricism. All of these models of inference apply to scientific theories and to philosophical theories as well. The assumption is that this difference in subject matter makes no difference with respect to the ground rules that govern what can be inferred and what cannot.

The naturalistic view just described – that rules for theory evaluation are not subject-matter specific – is different from the idea that the competition between “God exists” and “God does not exist” is just like the competition between “black holes exist” and “black holes do not exist.” I think there is an important difference. It is pretty clear what the existence of black holes predicts and what observations should ensue if there were no such thing. Observations can discriminate between the two alternatives. The theological question is more slippery. Theists and atheists often disagree about what

the existence of God predicts; indeed theists often disagree among themselves, and so do atheists. Science is very often not like this.

This is not to gainsay Duhem's thesis. The God hypothesis, taken by itself, doesn't predict much of anything, but that is also true of many perfectly good scientific hypotheses. The point, however, is that in science, the auxiliary assumptions that allow a hypothesis to make substantive predictions often have justifications that are independent of the hypothesis being tested; this seems not to be the case with respect to the question of whether God exists (Kitcher 1982; Sober (2004)). When a physician uses a tuberculosis test to see whether someone has tuberculosis, the interpretation of the test result depends on assumptions about the test's error characteristics. To interpret the positive test outcome, you need to know how probable a positive test outcome would be if the patient had tuberculosis, and how probable that outcome would be if he did not. Fortunately, good estimates of these probabilities can be had without already knowing whether the patient has tuberculosis. The sad fact of the matter – sad for both theists and atheists – is that the auxiliary assumptions that would be needed to test “God exists” against “God does not exist” are very hard to justify.

Acknowledgment

I am grateful to Frank Cabrera and Gregory Nirshberg for useful discussion.

Notes

- 1 In 1936 Ayer (2001) made logical positivism familiar to an English-speaking audience.
- 2 The positivists later revised their theory. The new idea was that a statement is meaningful precisely when it is either empirically testable or a truth of logic. My objections to the theory apply to this revised version as well.
- 3 The positivists tried to make the testability theory of meaning precise by giving a technical definition of testability. Hempel (1965a) argued that all these attempts were failures.
- 4 This is close to the view that Van Fraassen (1980) defends, which he calls “constructive empiricism.” Van Fraassen says that we are never obliged to believe a claim about unobservables, no matter how strong the evidence for it is.
- 5 Lipton (2004) and Psillos (2004), two defenders of IBE, recognize that the IBE schema described here is defective in that it ignores prior probabilities. Their reply is to reformulate IBE by describing the various features that make an explanation better or worse (with prior probabilities being one such). The risk of this strategy is that it will turn IBE into IBH (inference to the best hypothesis), with the concept of explanatoriness doing no real work.
- 6 However, it isn't clear to me that Swinburne himself gives the proposition that God exists a prior probability that is greater than $\frac{1}{2}$.
- 7 The 1959 work is Popper's own reworking in English from the 1934 German original, titled *Logik der Forschung. Zur Erkenntnistheorie der modernen Naturwissenschaft*, which literally translates as “Logic of Research: On the Epistemology of Modern Natural Science.”
- 8 See Sober (2015) for a derivation of this inequality from plausible assumptions.
- 9 Deism can also be formulated so that it allows the universe to be infinitely old.
- 10 Hempel (1965b) called this the special consequence condition of confirmation.
- 11 Of course, the same is true of atheism: P-&-not-G is less probable than P.

References

- Ayer, A. (2001) *Language, Truth and Logic*, London: Penguin Books. Original work published 1936.
- Carnap, R. (1950) "Empiricism, semantics, and ontology." *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 4: 20–40.
- Draper, P. (1989) "Pain and pleasure: An evidential problem for theists." *Noûs* 23: 331–350.
- Duhem, P. (1914) *The Aim and Structure of Physical Theory*, trans. P. Weiner. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Original work published 1906.
- Hacking, I. (1965) *The Logic of Statistical Inference*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hahn, H., Neurath, O., and Carnap, R. (1973) "The scientific conception of the world," trans P. Foulkes and M. Neurath, in M. Neurath and R. Cohen (eds.) *Empiricism and Sociology* Boston: Reidel, pp. 299–318. Original work published 1929.
- Harman, G. (1965) "The inference to the best explanation." *Philosophical Review* 74: 88–95.
- Hempel, C. (1965a) "Problems and changes in the empiricist criterion of meaning," in Hempel 1965b, pp. 101–122. Revised version of an original work published 1950 in *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 11: 41–63.
- Hempel, C. (1965b) *Aspects of Scientific Explanation and Other Essays*. New York: Free Press.
- Howard-Snyder (1996) *The Evidential Argument from Evil*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Josephson, J., and Josephson, S. (1994) *Abductive Inference: Computation, Philosophy, Technology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kitcher, P. (1982) *Abusing Science: The Case Against Creationism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Lipton, P. (2001) "Is explanation a guide to inference? A reply to Wesley C. Salmon," in G. Hon and S. Rakover (eds.) *Explanation: Theoretical Approaches and Applications*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, pp. 93–120.
- Lipton, P. (2004) *Inference to the Best Explanation*. New York: Routledge.
- Lycan, W. (1988) *Judgement and Justification*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Maxwell, G., (1962) "The ontological status of theoretical entities," in H. Feigl and G. Maxwell (eds.) *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 3. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 3–14.
- Plantinga, A. (1974) *The Nature of Necessity*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Psillos, S. (2002) "Simply the best: A case for abduction," in A. Kakas and F. Sadri (eds.) *Computational Logic: Logic Programming and Beyond*. Berlin: Springer-Verlag, pp. 605–626.
- Psillos, S. (2004) "Inference to the best explanation and Bayesianism," in F. Stadler (ed.) *Induction and Deduction in the Sciences*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, pp. 83–91.
- Popper, K. (2002) *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. Routledge Classics, Abingdon: Routledge. Original work published 1959.
- Quine, W. (1953) *From a Logical Point of View*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Salmon, W. (2001) "Explanation and confirmation: A Bayesian critique of inference to the best explanation," in G. Hon and S. S. Rakover (eds.) *Explanation: Theoretical Approaches and Applications*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, pp. 61–91.
- Sober, E. (1990) "Contrastive empiricism," in W. Savage (ed.) *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 14: *Scientific Theories*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 392–412.
- Sober, E. (2004). "Likelihood, model selection, and the Duhem-Quine problem." *Journal of Philosophy* 101: 1–22.
- Sober, E. (2010) "Empiricism," in S. Psillos and M. Curd (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Science*. New York: Routledge, pp. 129–138.
- Sober, E. (2015) *Ockham's Razor: A User's Manual*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Swinburne, R. (2004) *The Existence of God*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Van Fraassen, B. (1980) *The Scientific Image*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Evidence

MICHAEL TOOLEY

The focus of this chapter is upon the epistemic view known as evidentialism, and upon the bearing of that view upon religious beliefs in general, and theistic belief in particular. The first task, then, will be to get clear about what evidentialism is. To do this, I shall set out a preliminary account of evidentialism, and then consider some objections to evidentialism, thus formulated, with the goal of seeing whether any of those objections provides a reason for modifying that preliminary account. Since we shall see that one of the objections does that, I shall then offer a revised formulation.

Next, I shall turn to the notion of evidence, which lies at the heart of evidentialism, and which needs to be looked at more closely than is generally done. In particular, one needs to take account of the distinction between beliefs whose justification is based on other justified beliefs, and beliefs whose justification is not thus based – what may be referred to as epistemically basic, or non-inferentially justified beliefs. A crucial question is, then, what types of justified belief can be epistemically basic.

Formulations of evidentialism usually involve the view that epistemically basic justified beliefs are beliefs about one's own, present, mental states. There are, however, important alternatives that need to be considered, since they result in significantly different formulations of evidentialism.

Next, I shall examine two important objections to evidentialism. The first involves the claim that what beliefs one takes to be justified depends upon what presuppositions one embraces, where these are beliefs that, first of all, can vary greatly between individuals, and secondly, cannot, it is claimed, be either justified or refuted. The second objection is that evidentialism results in skepticism, and that since skepticism must be rejected, evidentialism cannot be a satisfactory account of the justification of beliefs.

Then, in the final section, I shall conclude with a brief discussion of the question of the bearing of evidentialism upon religious beliefs in general, and upon belief in the existence of God in particular.

What Is Evidentialism?

The earliest formulations of an evidentialist view of justified belief appear to be those advanced by the British empiricists John Locke and David Hume. First, there is John Locke's formulation in 1690 in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*:

The mind, if it will proceed rationally, ought to examine all the grounds of probability, and see how they make more or less for or against any proposition, before it assents to or dissents from it; and, upon a due balancing of the whole, reject or receive it, with a more or less firm assent, proportionably to the preponderancy of the greater grounds of probability on one side or the other. (Locke 1975, I:15, §5)

A similar, but briefer formulation was then offered in 1748 by David Hume in Section 10 of his *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*: "... in our reasonings concerning matter of fact, there are all imaginable degrees of assurance, from the highest certainty to the lowest species of moral evidence. A wise man, therefore, proportions his belief to the evidence" (Hume 2011, 10: IB).

A later formulation of an evidentialist view that is, I think, much more frequently cited and discussed was put forward by the English mathematician and philosopher W. K. Clifford, in his 1877 essay "The Ethics of Belief." Near the end of the first section of that essay he states the basic view that he had been defending up to that point as follows: "To sum up: it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence" (Clifford 1999, p. 77).

Finally, consider a much more recent formulation of an evidentialist view of justified belief, given by Richard Feldman and Earl Conee (1985, p. 15): "Doxastic attitude *D* towards proposition *p* is epistemically justified for *S* at *t* if and only if having *D* towards *p* fits the evidence *S* has at *t*."

The Ideas of Degrees of Assent and of Logical Probability

If one compares these formulations, some important points emerge. First, Locke (1975) makes explicit use both of the idea of degrees of assent, and also of the idea that, given a body of evidence, and a proposition, there is a certain probability that the proposition is true, given that evidence. Hume likewise refers to degrees of assurance or assent, and while he does not explicitly talk about the probability that a belief is true, given the evidence, his reference to proportioning one's belief to the evidence clearly presupposes that idea.

These formulations contrast sharply with that of Clifford (1999), who talks simply of belief, and of sufficient evidence for a belief. The idea that one can have different degrees of assent to a proposition, and that there would then be differences with regard to what counts as sufficient evidence, does not appear to be present in Clifford's discussion.

Finally, what about the formulation that Feldman and Conee (1985) offer? They talk about doxastic attitudes, and it may well be that they are thinking here of degrees of assent – although in the first paragraph of their essay the only doxastic attitudes they refer to are belief, disbelief, and suspension of judgment. Then, as regards the relation

between one's doxastic attitude and the evidence, they talk only of the attitude fitting the evidence, and do not explicitly bring in the idea that the evidence lends a certain probability to a proposition, and that one's degree of assent should be equal to that probability.

The formulations of Locke and Hume are superior, then, in explicitly bringing in both the idea of degrees of assent and the idea of probability as a relation between a proposition and evidence for a proposition – what later philosophers, most notably Rudolf Carnap (1962, pp. 23–33), referred to as “logical probability.”

Some philosophers, however – such as Branden Fitelson (Easwaran and Fitelson 2015) – claim that it is important to employ both the notion of degrees of assent – often referred to as credences – and the idea of (fully opinionated) beliefs. Doing this, however, gives rise to the question of how beliefs and credences are related. At the very least, beliefs must be constrained by credences, since surely one cannot believe a proposition while assenting to it at, say, the 0.2 level, and assenting to its denial at the 0.8 level. But if one insists that both notions are crucial, the questions arise, first of all, as to whether it is possible for there to be two propositions, p and q , such that one has the same level of credence k for p as for q , but where one believes p but does not believe q , and secondly, whether one can have a higher degree of assent to p than to q , but believe q while not believing p . I do not see how one can make sense of either of those things. If that is right, however, the natural conclusion is that beliefs analytically supervene upon credences, and thus that there is no need for the separate, qualitative notion of belief: everything can be formulated in terms of the more basic notion of degrees of assent.

Given the apparent superiority of the formulations of Locke and Hume, it is curious that many philosophers in discussing the ethics of belief – especially theists such as William James (1896) and Peter Van Inwagen (1996) – choose to focus on Clifford rather than on either Locke or Hume. Part of the explanation, I suggest, is that if one thinks in terms of belief, rather than in terms of degrees of assent, one can offer, as an alternative to Clifford's view (1999) that belief is never justified unless supported by sufficient evidence, the view, advanced by James (1896), that if there is sufficient reason for a proposition one should believe it, and if there is sufficient evidence against a proposition one should not believe, while if there is not sufficient evidence either for a proposition or against it, it is morally legitimate for one not to suspend belief, and instead, to allow one's “passional nature” to play a role, and to either accept the belief, or reject it, depending on one's hopes and desires.

Even if one sets aside the idea of degrees of assent, James's view does not strike me as plausible. My point here, however, is that if one thinks of belief as an either/or affair, the door is partially open for an argument along James's line. In contrast, once the idea of degrees of assent is on the table, and viewed as fundamental, that door is shut, since then the idea of suspending one's belief does not have any special status. To believe something is to have a degree of assent that ranges downward from a degree of assent equal to one – being subjectively completely certain that something is true – through every degree of assent greater than 0.5. Similarly, to disbelieve a proposition is to have a degree of assent that ranges upward from a degree of assent equal to zero – being subjectively completely certain that something is false – through every degree of assent less than 0.5. To suspend belief, then, is not a different sort of state: it is simply to have a degree of assent that is equal to 0.5. It is then no more plausible to say that one's hopes and desires should be allowed to play a role when one neither believes a proposition nor

believes its negation than it would be to say that one's hopes and desires should play a role for any other degree of assent.

Absolute Moral Principles vs *Prima Facie* Moral Principles

I think that there is another reason, however, why philosophers often focus on Clifford rather than on Locke or Hume – or on more recent writers such as Feldman and Conee – and that is that Clifford, in holding that “it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence” (1999) is advancing an absolute moral principle, a principle that one should never act against, no matter how horrendous the consequences of acting in accordance with it may be. Now there are moral views that hold that some actions are absolutely wrong. The Catholic Church, for example, maintains that that committing adultery could never be morally justified, even if doing so was necessary to save many lives. Very few people today, however, find such a view plausible, holding instead that for almost any conceivable action, no matter how bad, there could be circumstances in which performing that action would be better, given the consequences of not performing that action, than not performing the action.

The upshot is that Clifford, in advancing an absolute moral principle to the effect that it is always wrong to believe something for which there is insufficient evidence, is advancing a claim that is very implausible. Evidentialism, so formulated then, is a rather easy target.

How, then, should evidentialism be formulated, if, like Clifford, one views it as involving a moral claim? The alternatives to absolute moral principles are *prima facie* moral principles, where these are principles that say that actions of a given type are morally wrong, or morally permissible, other things being equal. Such principles, in turn, may take two different forms. On the one hand, there are principles that refer to properties of an action where the properties are morally relevant *in themselves*. Then one has what are known as right-making and wrong-making properties. On the other hand, one can have properties that are not morally relevant in themselves, but that are causally related to right-making and wrong-making properties. In either case, the idea is that the properties in question can have different weights, and whether an action is moral permissible or morally impermissible depends upon whether the total weight of the action's positive, morally significant properties is, or is not, as weighty as, or weightier than, the total weight of the action's negative, morally significant properties.

Alternative Views of Evidentialism

Normative claims are of two sorts: deontological and axiological. The former consist of propositions about what one ought or ought not do, about actions being right or wrong, being permissible, impermissible, or morally required. Axiological claims, on the other hand, involve propositions about the desirability or the undesirability, the goodness or badness, of states of affairs.

Evidentialism, as formulated by Clifford, claims that it is morally wrong to accept beliefs on the basis of insufficient evidence, and thus is a deontological view. What about the other formulations mentioned above?

Feldman and Conee (1985) talk about a given doxastic attitude's being "epistemically justified" for a person, and this sounds like a deontological claim, since to say that a person is not justified in doing something is naturally taken as saying that the person ought not to be doing the thing in question.

Locke (1975) uses the clearly deontological term "ought," but it occurs in a hypothetical context – "The mind, if it will proceed rationally, ought to examine all the grounds of probability ..." (B4: 15) – and this raises the question of whether Locke thinks that one morally *should* proceed rationally. I am inclined to interpret Locke that way; however, it could be that Locke, rather than thinking that one had an obligation to form beliefs in a rational fashion, held only that a disposition to form beliefs in that fashion was a desirable disposition to have.

Finally, Hume (2011) says, "A wise man, therefore, proportions his belief to the evidence" (§10: 1) Did Hume think that there was an obligation to attempt to be wise? Or did he think merely that being wise was a desirable state of affairs? It is, I think, not entirely clear whether Hume was advancing a deontological claim or an axiological one.

In short, evidentialism can be viewed as making either a deontological claim about the relation that should obtain between one's beliefs and the evidence that one possesses, or else an axiological claim about the desirability of having beliefs that are thus related to one's evidence.

Is Evidentialism a Basic Normative Principle or a Derived Normative Principle?

Some moral principles are based upon other moral principles. Consider, for example, the deontological claim that one should not step on someone's toes. That principle might be derived as follows:

It is *prima facie* wrong to do something that causes someone to be in pain.
Stepping on a person's toes causes that person to be in pain.
Therefore: It is *prima facie* wrong to step on a person's toes.

The latter proposition is thus a derived moral principle, following as it does from the combination of the more basic moral principle that it *prima facie* wrong to do something that causes someone to be in pain, together with the non-normative, purely empirical claim that stepping on a person's toes causes that person to be in pain.

As with deontological claims, so with axiological claims: some axiological claims can be derived from the combination of other axiological claims and non-normative claims. For example:

Pain is undesirable.
Whatever causes something that is undesirable is *prima facie* undesirable.
Being stung by a bee causes pain.
Therefore: Being stung by a bee is *prima facie* undesirable.

Could *all* normative principles be derived from more basic normative principles together with relevant non-normative claims? Given that this would necessitate either an infinite chain of more and more basic normative principles, or else a derivation that was ultimately circular, it would seem not. So if there are any true normative principles at all, some of those principles must be basic in the sense of not being derived from other normative principles.

Given the distinction between basic and derived normative principles, is evidentialism a basic normative principle, or a derived one? W. K. Clifford in his (1877) essay “The Ethics of Belief” (1999) viewed it as a derived moral principle. There he focused on two cases, one that of a shipowner who, by not forming the appropriate belief concerning the seaworthiness of his vessel, acted in a way that brought about the deaths of many people. Clifford then argued that the conclusion to be drawn from such cases was a perfectly general one:

In the two supposed cases which have been considered, it has been judged wrong to believe on insufficient evidence, or to nourish belief by suppressing evidence and avoiding investigation. The reason for this judgment is not far to seek: it is that in both cases the belief held by one man was of great importance to other men. But forasmuch as no belief held by one man, however seemingly trivial the belief, and however obscure the believer, is ever actually insignificant or without its effect on the fate of mankind, we have no choice but to extend our judgment to all cases whatever. Belief, that sacred faculty which prompts the decisions of our will, and knits into harmonious working all the compacted energies of our being, is ours not for ourselves, but for humanity. (Clifford 1999, p. 74)

One might well object, to Clifford’s generalizing from cases such as that of the shipowner to a conclusion concerning absolutely any belief whatever, that it is only in relatively rare cases that holding beliefs that are not supported by adequate evidence will harm others. Clifford, however, argues that this is not so:

It is not only the leader of men, statesman, philosopher, or poet, that owes this bounden duty to mankind. Every rustic who delivers in the village alehouse his slow, infrequent sentences, may help to kill or keep alive the fatal superstitions which clog his race. Every hard-worked wife of an artisan may transmit to her children beliefs which shall knit society together, or rend it to pieces. No simplicity of mind, no obscurity of station, can escape the universal duty of questioning all that we believe. (Clifford 1999, pp. 74–75)

Clifford’s contention that no belief, no matter how trivial, is “without its effect on the fate of mankind” is surely an overstatement. However, the type of argument that Clifford offers could instead be advanced to support, not the absolutely universal claim that a belief not based upon the evidence will harm others, but, instead, the claim that holding such beliefs is likely to be connected to a *disposition* to hold beliefs that are not adequately supported by one’s evidence, and that such a disposition is likely to cause harm to others.

Thus one can argue, in the first place, that compartmentalization is improbable, and that if one allows oneself to form beliefs that are not adequately supported by the evidence in matters that, generally speaking, do not bear upon the well-being of others,

it would seem likely that one will also be disposed to form beliefs that are not adequately supported by evidence where the beliefs are ones that do bear upon the well-being of others.

In the second place, the temptation to form beliefs that are not in accord with the evidence will generally be greatest when much is at stake – and, in particular, when the weight of evidence is against what one would very much like to be true. It would surely be better, for example, if God existed, and if death were not the end of a person's existence, and most people would surely like those propositions to be true. So if one has any tendency to accept beliefs not supported by the evidence, is it not very likely that one would do so in such cases?

But are the beliefs just mentioned problematic? If they are not, then someone's accepting them on the basis of inadequate evidence, though it may result in others doing the same, will not harm others in the way that it would if those beliefs were false: one will not thereby be keeping alive superstitions that block the progress of the human race.

In fact, however, there would seem to be good reason for thinking that the beliefs in question are false. Thus, as regards the existence of God, it can be argued that the presence in the world of both extreme moral evil and also horrendous natural evils, together with a plethora of lesser undesirable states, provides the basis for very strong versions of evidential arguments from evil (Draper 1989; Plantinga and Tooley 2008; Tooley 2012). Those arguments, moreover, also tell against the existence of lesser supernatural beings that are, if not morally perfect, at least morally good, and if not omnipotent and omniscient, at least fairly powerful and very knowledgeable.

Secondly, as regards survival of death, in the absence of benevolent and very powerful supernatural beings, the prospect of one's being resurrected after death is not at all probable, so that one's only hope of surviving death would involve one's having an immaterial mind or soul. A variety of everyday observations, however, along with experimental studies of the brain, provide very strong evidence that the mind, rather than being some immaterial substance, is simply the brain. These include such facts as the following. First of all, if one suffers a serious, but not too serious blow to the head, one may become unconscious. Secondly, different parts of one's brain can be permanently damaged by strokes, gunshot wounds, and so on, and what one finds is not only that such injuries affect mental functioning and personality, but that which psychological capacities or traits are affected depends upon what part of the brain is damaged. Thirdly, there are diseases that can radically affect one's mental functioning, one's memories, and so on, one of the most familiar of which is Alzheimer's disease, whose effects over time can be so extreme that it is quite natural to think that the person who once existed no longer does. Fourthly, there is the phenomenon of aging, where not only one's body, but also one's mind, deteriorates, so that various psychological capacities, such as memory, gradually decline. Fifthly, and as has been shown by numerous psychological experiments, the mental capacities of very young members of our species gradually increase as they become older and their brains mature. Sixthly, psychotropic drugs can alter mood very significantly, can relieve depression and anxiety, can give rise to paranoia, or reduce it, and so on. Finally, the differences that one finds

both between humans and other animals and between different species of non-human animals correlate with differences in the structures present in the relevant brains (Plantinga and Tooley 2008, pp. 15–19). All of these and many other facts are exactly what is to be expected if the mind is the brain, since then all our mental powers have their categorical bases in complex neural circuits, whereas such facts would be surprising and completely without explanation if the mind were instead an immaterial substance. Consequently, even if *property* dualism is true, so that states of consciousness involve properties that are not reducible to those of physics, there is excellent reason for believing that *substance* dualism is false, and thus that the demise of one's brain at death is also the end of the existence of one's mind, and thus of oneself.

There would appear, then, to be very strong evidence against two beliefs that most people would very much like to be true, and if one has any tendency to form beliefs that are not supported by adequate evidence, the temptation to do so with regard to beliefs that matter a great deal will surely be very hard to resist. The result, as Clifford (1999) says, will then be to keep alive superstitions that harm the human race.

The situation, in short, is that while there are beliefs that, if accepted on the basis of inadequate evidence, do not in themselves *directly* cause harm either to oneself or others, there is good reason to think that accepting some beliefs with a degree of assent that outstrips the evidence makes it more likely that one will do so in the case of other beliefs where failing to proportion one's degree of assent to the evidence will negatively affect both one's own well-being and that of others, with the temptation being greatest when the beliefs are ones that one would very much like to be true.

The upshot is that if one believes that one should base one's beliefs upon the evidence, one need not view such a principle as a basic moral principle, since such a principle can instead be derived from the much more general principle that one has a *prima facie* obligation not to cause others to be exposed to the risk of harm.

At the same time, if one considers a "last person standing" scenario, where there is only a single survivor of some great catastrophe, and thus where there is no one else to be harmed, one might feel that for that sole survivor to accept beliefs that made him or her happier, but that were not supported by the evidence, would be ignoble, and that one should instead have the courage to see the world as it really is.

Acceptance of this thought does not, however, undercut Clifford's type of argument, since a given property may, in addition to being a wrong-making property, be such as is causally connected with other wrong-making properties. The failure, in the words of Walter Kaufmann (1971), to have "eyes that see dust as dust without blinking" may be both a defect of character in its own right, and also such as may cause harm to others.

Is Evidentialism an Incomplete Account of the Ethics of Belief?

If some formulation of evidentialism is a sound moral principle, does it provide a complete account of the ethics of belief? It would seem not, and the reason is this. As was found in a Gallup poll (2014, p. 1), "More than four in 10 Americans continue to believe that God created humans in their present form 10,000 years ago, a view that

has changed little over the past three decades,” and only one American in five accepts the biological view that humans and other species have evolved over millions of years from less advanced forms of life via a purely naturalistic process in which no supernatural beings played any part. Now it can be argued that most such people are accepting beliefs that they have good evidence against, on the grounds that many people surely know that their beliefs are rejected by most scientists. However, consider people who grow up in a setting where they are isolated from any evidence against creationism, or against a Young Earth view. Are their beliefs epistemically justified, as evidentialism seems to imply, or not?

Similarly, most people in the world, one suspects, believe that miracles have occurred in the religion that they accept, but not in other religions, and it would seem likely that some of those people have been exposed to miraculous claims in the case of their own religion, but not in the case of other religions, and claims, moreover, that were put forward by people that they have no reason to think untrustworthy. It could well be the case that some of those people do proportion the strengths of their beliefs to the total evidence that they possess, thereby satisfying evidentialist principles. Is there, then, nothing problematic about their beliefs in such cases?

If not, then evidentialism, provided it is not open to other objections, may well provide a satisfactory and complete account of the ethics of belief. But consider the sort of derivation of an evidentialist principle that Clifford (1999) offered, set out above. Cannot one parallel that type of argument in the present case? For if the logical probability that a given belief, *B*, is true is equal to some quantity *p*, then there is, of course, a probability of $(1 - p)$ that the belief is false. Depending upon what belief *B* is, believing it may, if it turns out to be false, harm others, either because believing *B* may lead one to perform actions that harm others – such as killing heretics, or homosexuals, or women who are not virgins when they marry – or because one’s believing *B* may give others a reason for believing *B*.

In short, even if one has strong evidence for the truth of a proposition, and proportions one’s belief to that evidence, it is important to ask what is at stake, how much it matters whether the proposition is true or false. If it matters a great deal, one should surely ask about the *breadth* of one’s evidence, and if it is fairly limited in scope, is it not plausible that one has an obligation to look for more evidence – especially evidence from different sources than the evidence one presently has?

It seems reasonable to conclude, accordingly, that evidentialism cannot provide a *complete* account of the ethics of belief, since if the truth of a given belief is an important matter, one also has an obligation to seek out additional evidence bearing upon that belief. This will be so especially when one’s evidence for one’s belief is *biased* in a certain way – as, for example, when the belief is a religious one, and one’s evidence is confined to the testimony of those who accept the belief in question.

How does this bear upon the question of whether one’s current belief is justified? The answer is that if one is justified in believing both that one failed to search for further evidence, even though the belief was an important one, and also that one’s evidence was biased in a certain way, that will be *further evidence that is relevant to one’s current belief*, and evidence that reduces the probability that the belief in question is true – possibly to the extent that one is no longer justified in accepting the belief.

A Preliminary Formulation

In the light of the preceding, here is an initial formulation of evidentialism. First, there are different doxastic attitudes that one can have. These include those of believing, disbelieving, and suspending belief. But one should not view doxastic attitudes as restricted to these three. In the first place, there can be degrees of belief and degrees of disbelief, represented, in the case of belief, by numbers just barely greater than 0.5 up to one, and in the case of disbelief, from numbers just barely less than 0.5 down to zero. In the second place, there are also good reasons for holding that the familiar doxastic attitudes of beliefs, disbelief, and suspension of belief are *not psychologically basic states*. Instead, they supervene on degrees of belief.

Secondly, there is the idea of normative principles that determine whether a given doxastic attitude to some proposition is epistemically justified or not. On some views, those principles are basic ethical principles. Alternatively, they may be regarded, not as basic, but as derivable from general principles that are not restricted to doxastic states. Or, one may hold that while the relevant principles are basic principles, in the sense that they specify right-making and wrong-making principles that concern only doxastic states, those normative principles are also capable of being justified by being derived from other principles that are not restricted to doxastic states.

Thirdly, there is the idea of the evidence that a person has at a given time for the truth of a proposition, where the term “evidence” must be used to include not only other justified beliefs, but also those basis states that provide the justification for beliefs that are non-inferentially justified, or epistemically basic. For if one held instead that evidence cannot consist of anything other than other justified beliefs that one has, it would then be true, for example, that if one believed that one was undergoing a complete hallucination, one would not be justified in believing even that one was at least having experiences, that one was conscious, at that time.

Fourthly, there is the idea of logical – or epistemic – probability, where this is the idea of degrees of support that one proposition p can provide for another proposition q , where this can range from a value of 0, as in the case where p is incompatible with q , through all the values between 0 and 1, as p provides stronger and stronger support for q , up to the value of 1, as one has in the case where p entails q .

Given these ideas, evidentialism, to put it roughly, is then the view that whether a given doxastic attitude on the part of a person at time t toward a given proposition p is epistemically justified depends upon the evidence that the person possesses at time t for proposition p . More precisely:

A person S 's assenting at level k to proposition p at time t is epistemically, *prima facie* justified *if and only if* the logical probability of p relative to S 's total evidence E at time t is equal to k .

Some comments on this are in order. First of all, it can be objected that, in moving from the everyday qualitative notions of belief, disbelief, and suspension of belief to the quantitative notion of degrees of assent, one has moved to a concept that applies in very

few cases, since it seems very unlikely, for example, that for any person there will be some number k that they would choose as representing the exact degree of assent, or subjective probability for them, that it will rain tomorrow. Secondly, it also seems very unlikely that, for any given person, there is some number k such that the probability that it will rain tomorrow, given their total evidence, is exactly equal to k .

Both points seem right, but in both cases one can get an account that is psychologically more realistic by thinking in terms of ranges rather than exact values, and then reformulating evidentialism as follows:

A person S 's having a degree of assent to proposition p at time t that corresponds to a range r is epistemically, *prima facie* justified if and only if the logical probability of p relative to S 's total evidence E at time t falls within range r .

Unsound Objections to Evidentialism

Duties Not to Accept Some Beliefs Supported by the Evidence

Typical examples here are ones where one acquires evidence that bears in a negative way upon the moral character of one's friend or spouse, the claim being that in such cases one has personal, agent-centered obligations to give the person the benefit of the doubt, and thus that one should not proportion one's belief to the evidence.

This is a weak objection, since it is based upon the idea that evidentialism must be formulated as an absolute normative principle, rather than as a *prima facie* principle. Here, as elsewhere, with the exception of moral views that involve only a single basic moral principle – such as Kantian views, and many forms of consequentialism – absolute moral principles are very implausible.

The Right to Adopt Different Beliefs When the Evidence is "Insufficient"

Here philosophers typically appeal to William James's idea (1896) that our "fears, hopes, and desires" not only do influence our beliefs, but also that it is appropriate that they do so. As we saw earlier, this view, which was never plausible to begin with, does not even get going once the idea of degrees of assent is on the table.

Forgotten Justifications?

A more interesting objection is this. Suppose that one once had very good evidence that p , but that, while continuing to believe that p , one no longer recalls what one's evidence was. It might be objected that one is still justified in believing that p , but that evidentialism entails that one is no longer justified.

This objection is also mistaken. If one has a belief that p , and recalls that one had that belief in the past, if one has good evidence that one only forms beliefs whose strength is proportional to one's total evidence, then the belief that p remains justified, via that indirect route.

Same Evidence, but Different Epistemic Status?

As Daniel Mittag (n.d.) notes, the case of forgotten evidence gives rise to a different objection, since there could be two cases where one had exactly the same beliefs, and the same evidence for those beliefs, but where in one case one *had had* good evidence for those beliefs, and in the other case not: “The relevant beliefs in both cases appear to be on an evidential par: neither belief seems to be supported by adequate evidence. The objection is that there, nevertheless, is a justificatory difference between the two cases, and evidentialism is unable to account for this” (p.8).

The answer is that this is simply to reject an internalist account of justification, for on any internalist account, what beliefs are justified at a given time is determined by what mental states one has access to at that time: past states of affairs cannot serve to justify beliefs.

The “Doxastic Involuntarism” Objection

Evidentialism claims that one should proportion one’s degree of assent to the strength of one’s total evidence. An objection that is often raised is that since it is true that one should do something only if it is the case that one *can* do that thing, evidentialism implies that one can choose to change one’s beliefs. But this is false, so evidentialism must be rejected.

The answer to this objection is that while it is true that we humans cannot change our beliefs by a mere act of will – though there is nothing impossible in the idea of beings who could do that – we can certainly do things that may very well result in changes in our beliefs. In particular, we can reflect upon what the logical, or epistemic, probability of a given belief is relative to one’s total evidence. Moreover, if one does this, and arrives at the conclusion that the probability that *p* is true, given one’s *total* evidence, is different from one’s present degree of assent to *p*, it is surely true that one can then change one’s degree of assent. Indeed, it seems plausible to me that if one comes to believe that the probability that *p* is true, given one’s *total* evidence, is equal to *k*, that will almost inevitably cause one to modify one’s degree of assent so that it is equal to *k*.

A Serious Objection to Evidentialism, and a Revised Formulation

Beliefs that Are Not Causally Based upon the Relevant Evidence Are Not Justified

Let us now turn to what I think is the most serious objection to the preliminary formulation of evidentialism. This objection, advanced early on by Alvin Goldman (1979) and Hilary Kornblith (1980, pp. 601 ff.), is that, for a given belief to be justified, it is not enough that one *possesses* adequate evidence for that belief; it must also be the case that the evidence in question causally gave rise to the belief.

This objection is addressed by Feldman and Conee (1985, pp. 24–25). Their response involves introducing the idea of “well-foundedness,” for which they offer an explicit definition, and from which it follows that for *S*’s doxastic attitude *D* toward proposition *p* to be epistemically justified, it must be the case that “*S* has *D* toward *p* on the basis of

some body of evidence *e*,” where *e* satisfies certain constraints. They then go on to say, however:

We acknowledge that there is an epistemic concept – well-foundedness – that appeals to the notion of basing an attitude on evidence, and this may be a causal notion. What seems to confer epistemic merit on basing one’s belief on the evidence is that in doing one *appreciates* the evidence. It is unclear whether one can appreciate the evidence without being caused to have the belief by the evidence. But in any event we see no such causal requirement in the case of justification. (1985, p. 33n.22)

Here, it seems to me, Feldman and Conee have made a wrong turn, and that Goldman and Kornblith are right in holding that a belief that is not well-founded is not justified, where well-foundedness involves the belief’s being caused by the evidence in an appropriate way.

A Revised Formulation of Evidentialism

To arrive at the revised formulation of evidentialism, one needs to specify what counts as a belief’s being caused in the right way by the evidence. Here my proposal is that a belief is caused in the right way by one’s evidence only if, first of all, the belief is caused by the combination of the evidence together with a justified belief about the relation of logical probability between the evidence and the belief, and secondly, there is the appropriate relation between the logical probability in question and one’s degree of assent. Here, then, is the revised formulation of the earlier, somewhat idealized version of evidentialism:

A person *S*’s assenting at level *k* to proposition *p* at time *t* is epistemically justified if and only if

1. The logical probability of *p* relative to *S*’s total evidence *E* at time *t* is equal to *k*;
2. *S* has at time *t* a justified belief that the logical probability of *p* relative to *S*’s total evidence *E* at time *t* is equal to *k*;
3. *S* has the same justified belief during some temporal interval, however short, immediately before *t*; and
4. *S*’s assenting at level *k* to proposition *p* at time *t* was caused by the combination of *S*’s total evidence *E* together with the justified belief referred to in (3).

Then, as before, one can get a psychologically more realistic version by replacing references to exact values by references to ranges:

A person *S*’s having a degree of assent to proposition *p* at time *t* that corresponds to a range *r* is epistemically, *prima facie* justified if and only if

1. The logical probability of *p* relative to *S*’s total evidence *E* at time *t* falls within range *r*;
2. *S* has at time *t* a justified belief that the logical probability of *p* relative to *S*’s total evidence *E* at time *t* falls within range *r*;

3. S has the same justified belief during some temporal interval, however short, immediately before t ; and
4. S's assenting at level k to proposition p at time t was caused by the combination of S's total evidence E together with the justified belief referred to in (3).

Given this psychologically more realistic formulation, a belief about how strongly the evidence supports a given belief need not be a belief that the logical probability of the belief upon the evidence is precisely equal to some number k . The belief can, for example, be a belief that the degree of support is equal to or greater than some number k , or that it is between two numbers j and k . Alternatively, it can be vaguer and qualitative, such as the belief that the evidential support is very strong, etc.

Presuppositionalism as an Objection to Evidentialism

A variety of views have been labelled "presuppositionalism," but the one that is most relevant to evidentialism is this. One is confronted with a variety of worldviews, including those associated with different religions, along with materialist, secularist, and scientific worldviews. Which of these general worldviews one accepts will determine what counts as evidence. If one is a fundamentalist Christian, the fact that a certain belief is affirmed in the Bible is decisive evidence in support of the truth of that belief. If one is a Catholic, the fact that something has been solemnly affirmed by the pope is very strong evidence that the belief in question is true. Similarly, if one accepts a mystical worldview, mystical experiences are epistemically very relevant, and may provide strong evidence that the apparent, physical world is ultimately illusory. By contrast, if one embraces a secular, or materialistic worldview, one will hold that none of the things just mentioned are evidence for the truth of any beliefs.

The purported conclusion, therefore, is that evidentialism is an empty principle, since there is no way of deciding what counts as evidence: any view that a person has on this is dependent on the world view that he or she accepts.

Evidence, Direct Awareness, and Foundational Beliefs

Both to answer this objection, and to have a full and satisfactory formulation of evidentialism, we need to consider the idea of evidence. As was noted earlier, evidentialism would not be satisfactory if one interpreted evidence as referring only to justified beliefs that potentially provide support for other beliefs, since, for example, even if one knew that one's apparent perception of a ripe tomato was hallucinatory, one would certainly still be justified in believing that one was having an experience of a region in one's visual field that was both qualitatively red and roughly round, and this would be so even though there were no justified beliefs that one had at that time that would provide evidence for that belief.

If evidentialism is even to get started, then, evidence must be taken to include not only other justified beliefs that one has, but also what might be called basis states that one is directly aware of, such as experiences or parts of experiences with a certain qualitative nature. One's awareness of such states therefore serves to justify beliefs that are epistemically basic, that are non-inferentially justified. Moreover, if one considers

the justification of beliefs that are justified via the support of other justified beliefs, there is a very familiar argument to the effect that if one asks what the justification is of those other justified beliefs, the only satisfactory way to avoid circular justifications or infinite regresses is to conclude that all inferentially justified beliefs must ultimately be justified on the basis of non-inferentially justified beliefs.

What states, then, are basis states? A plausible answer is that basis states are states of which one can be *directly aware*. But what types of states can one be directly aware of? The case of hallucination just mentioned supports the claim that in perception what one is directly aware of are not external, physical states of affairs, but properties that are intrinsic properties of one's experiences. Similarly, if one considers one's memory beliefs about the past, what one is directly aware of are not past events, such as seeing the moon last night, but one's memory belief that one saw the moon last night, since one could be in the same state one is presently in if one had been hallucinating, and then one would still be aware of the memory belief in question, but not aware of any past state of having seen the moon last night.

The question of whether one can be directly aware of physical objects is, of course, a controversial issue, and thus one on which there is much more to be said – though I think that the view that direct awareness is restricted to one's own present mental states is very plausible.

Moreover, if that view is right, then the presuppositionalist objection to evidentialism set out in the previous section is open to a decisive answer. For the presuppositionalist claims that we all start from worldviews, and that we decide on the basis of those worldviews which beliefs are plausible and which not, but if there are states of affairs that we are directly aware of, and thus beliefs that are non-inferentially justified on the basis of such direct awareness, and if, in addition, all other justified beliefs ultimately are justified via their relations to non-inferentially justified beliefs, then there is a natural starting point for any inquiry into whether a given belief is justified. Moreover, if the states that one is directly aware of are one's own present mental states, then one is not thereby embracing anything that might plausibly be called a worldview: to affirm that one has experiences, beliefs, and other purely mental states is surely not to advance a worldview.

Notice that the situation would be different if one held, instead, that one was also directly aware of physical states of affairs. For then the presuppositionalist could maintain that one is thereby embracing one of a set of conflicting worldviews. For example, there is George Berkeley's view, in *Principles of Human Knowledge*, that there are no physical objects, there are only finite minds with sensory experiences that are caused by the infinite mind that is God, so in holding that one was directly aware of physical objects, one would be assuming, without argument, that Berkeley's worldview is false.

There is a further reason why the idea of non-inferentially justified beliefs is crucial to evidentialism, and it involves a point about evidence. Suppose that p is some justified belief, and that p confirms some other belief q , in the sense that the probability that q is true given that p is true is greater than one half. Suppose further that q confirms some other belief r , in the sense that the probability that r is true given that q is true is greater than one half. All of this may be so without its being the case that the probability that r is true given that p is true is greater than one half.¹

The upshot is that whether a given belief is justified is not settled by the fact that one has some other justified beliefs relative to which it is more likely than not that the belief is true. What matters is whether the belief is justified relative to a set of beliefs that contains all of one's non-inferentially justified beliefs.

A Final Objection to Evidentialism: The Threat of Skepticism

This final objection, which is advanced by Keith DeRose in his (2000) article "Ought We to Follow Our Evidence?" is as follows: First, as regards skeptical hypotheses concerning whether one is really perceiving an external, physical world, DeRose focuses specifically on the skeptical hypothesis that one is just a brain in a vat, being stimulated to have various sensory experiences, and says: "I think I ought to believe this hypothesis is false, and to so believe very firmly and confidently indeed. One who didn't firmly believe such an hypothesis to be false of himself would seem to me to be epistemically defective, perhaps even deranged, and is certainly not believing as he ought" (p. 703).

Next DeRose considers Jonathan Vogel's contention, in his (1980) article "Cartesian Scepticism and Inference to the Best Explanation," that an appeal to inference to the best explanation can serve to show that the hypothesis that what Vogel refers to as the "real-world hypothesis" (RWH) – that there is an external physical world – is more probable than skeptical alternatives. DeRose (2000, p. 705) questions whether this is so, but he also contends that even if Vogel's contention is sound, that is not enough, because the non-skeptical view "won't fit the evidence by a wide enough margin to justify the degree to which I think rationality not only allows but requires us to believe the RWH over the various sceptical hypothesis."

What is one to say about this argument? As regards the second premise, although Vogel's argument is interesting, I too have doubts about it. In addition, Vogel does not show that the real-world hypothesis has a *significantly* higher probability than any skeptical hypothesis, let alone than a disjunction of skeptical hypothesis.

The problem with DeRose's argument, however, lies not in the second premise, but in the first. What grounds does DeRose offer for the claim that we ought to believe that external world skepticism is false, let alone that one should believe it so firmly that someone who didn't do so would be "perhaps even deranged"? The answer is that he offers none at all.

It is common to assume in epistemology that skepticism must be false, or to say that, regardless of whether it is true or false, no one could really believe it. Consider, however, a Berkeley-style hypothesis that reality consists of only finite immaterial minds plus a great immaterial mind that produces experiences in finite minds in accordance with various regularities such that those immaterial persons have experiences of just the sort they would have if they were material persons in a physical world. Is that hypothesis significantly more complex than the physical world hypothesis? Does it have less explanatory power? Perhaps either or both of these things is so, but surely neither is obviously so.

It is not easy to see, then, why such a hypothesis should have a significantly lower *a priori* probability than the non-skeptical alternative, and if it does not, then, given that the two hypotheses generate the same experiential predictions, it follows that the

Berkeleyan-style hypothesis cannot have a significantly lower *a posteriori* probability relative to the totality of true propositions about one's experiences.

What about the claims that no one could believe such a hypothesis, or that anyone who did would be "epistemically defective, perhaps even deranged"? In the first place, given that the Berkeleyan-style skeptical view and the non-skeptical view generate all the same predictions regarding one's experiences, it is hard to see why there should be any difficulty believing and acting in accordance with the skeptical alternative. Secondly, as a matter of fact, many people do accept the skeptical view, since the doctrine known as *maya* that is part of Hinduism is generally interpreted as the view that the physical world is an illusion, and has no true reality.

The widespread philosophical tendency not to offer the external-world skeptic a level playing field, to hold that the onus of proof is upon the skeptic, and to claim that if he or she cannot meet that onus, then one is justified in rejecting skepticism, seems to me philosophically indefensible. If this is right, then it is no objection to evidentialism that, in the absence of arguments, evidentialism leaves it an open question whether skepticism is true.

Evidentialism and Theistic Belief

How significant is evidentialism with regard to theistic belief? The answer is that it is very significant, and in two ways. First of all, there are serious evidential versions of the argument from evil against the existence of God. One type, for example, argues that theism can be shown to be unlikely to be true by establishing that there is some alternative hypothesis – other than the mere negation of theism – that is logically incompatible with theism, and that is more probable than theism, given relevant evidence, such as the pleasure and pain in the world, and how those are distributed. This approach – which was originally used by David Hume (1980, p. 75) in an argument in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (Part 11), and which has been set out and defended in a detailed way in Paul Draper (1989) – can be viewed as involving an inference to the best explanation, a type of inductive inference that was discovered by C. S. Peirce (1931–1958), and which is now very widely accepted.

Another version of the evidential argument from evil was set out in Tooley (Plantinga and Tooley 2008, pp. 108–150; Tooley 2012), and involves the idea of using a substantive theory of logical probability to set out the argument from evil, and then of showing that when this is done, one can derive a formula giving the probability that God does not exist relative to information about the number of apparent evils to be found in the world.

Secondly, evidentialism also bears upon some arguments in support of the existence of God, with arguments that appeal to miracles being among the most important in this regard. Here theists often focus on a single, claimed miracle – such as the supposed resurrection of Jesus – and attempt to argue that the records concerning that event make it more likely than not that the event took place. One way of responding is to argue directly against the claim, and to contend that, even confining oneself to the testimony being cited, it is more reasonable to conclude that the purported event did not take place. If one approaches the matter from an evidentialist perspective, however, one can

take quite a different tack by asking what the *total*, relevant evidence is, and this will in fact result in a *much* more powerful response to such arguments.

One thing that one will want to do, then, is to look at miracle claims in general. Thus David Hume (2011), in addition to offering a problematic *a priori* argument for the impossibility of miracles in Section 10 “Of Miracles” in *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, sets out a number of empirical considerations, supported by extended examples, against miracle claims – such as, first, that the testimony supporting such claims is not that of dispassionate, educated, and well-informed individuals; secondly, that the claims advanced were not at a time and place where they could be falsified by others; thirdly, that there are many instances of “forged miracles and prophecies and supernatural events,” or where claims about miracles have been shown to be false; and fourthly, that the reports of such events are “observed chiefly to abound among ignorant and barbarous nations,” and so on.

Another very important type of relevant evidence concerns the origin and the development of claims about miracles, and here there have been careful studies of how, given a situation in which nothing at all remarkable has taken place, fabulous stories can gradually develop, which are then elaborated over time, with the introduction of more detail, and descriptions of events that are ever more miraculous.

One of the most scholarly of such accounts is that of A. D. White, in his book, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology within Christendom* (1896), in a chapter entitled “The Growth of Healing Legends.” In that chapter, White took a very close look at the miracles attributed to St. Francis Xavier, by reading Xavier’s own letters, those of his contemporaries, and then later biographies of Xavier. White – who was himself a Christian, and not an unbeliever – showed, first, how events that are described by Xavier, and that are not in any way miraculous, gradually get transformed in biographies of Xavier, first becoming miraculous, and then ever more impressively so, as the biography is further removed from the time of Xavier, and, secondly, how, though neither Xavier nor his contemporaries ever claimed that Xavier had resurrected anyone from the dead, later biographers do advance such claims, and offer more and more evidence for such claims the further removed the biography is from Xavier’s time.

Finally, claims that miracles have occurred are typically associated with religions, such as Christianity, that also claim that miracles occur today. This contention has been investigated by a number of groups and individuals. As regards groups, a committee formed by the Archbishop of Canterbury carried out a careful study of faith healing, and in their 1920 report they indicated that they had found no evidence to support the claim that such healings take place. A report by a Committee of the British Medical Association issued in 1956 came to the same conclusion. Then there have been numerous investigations by individuals, such as the examination, in D. J. West (1957), of 11 claimed miraculous cures at Lourdes, and a 19-year attempt by a British psychiatrist Louis Rose (1971) to find evidence for faith healings, both of which arrived at negative conclusions. Then there have been investigations of claimed faith healers by, for example, an American doctor, William A. Nolen (1974), and by magicians such as James Randi (1989) and Joe Nickell (1993), all of whom found only fraud. Lastly, there have been a number of very careful scientific studies of whether prayer for those who are ill is efficacious, three of the best of which are a Mayo Clinic study done by Aviles et al. (2001), the MANTRA II study done by Krucoff et al. (2005), and the famous STEP

study done by Benson et al. (2006), all of which concluded that there was no evidence that intercessory prayer was efficacious.

The conclusion, in short, is that when one examines the total evidence that is relevant to whether miracles occur, that evidence supports, very strongly indeed, the proposition that miracles do not occur. If evidentialism is right, then, the belief that miracles do occur is not a belief that one should have. This, in turn, not only undermines any argument from miracles to the existence of God, it also is very strong evidence against any religion, such as Christianity, that does claim that miracles do occur.

Note

- 1 For example, suppose that p is the proposition that there is going to be a race, that A will roll dice and enter the race if and only if the total is more than six, while B will also roll dice, and enter the race if and only the total is more than six and, in addition, A also enters the race. Further, let q be the proposition A will enter the race, and that B will roll dice, and enter the race if and only the total is more than six and, in addition, A enters the race. Finally, let r be the proposition that B will enter the race. Then since the probability of getting a total great than six when one rolls two dice is equal to $\frac{21}{36}$, the probability that q is true given that p is true is equal to that value, and thus greater than one half, as is the probability that r is true given that q is true, whereas the probability that r is true given that p is true is equal to $\frac{21}{36} \times \frac{21}{36}$, i.e., $\frac{441}{1296}$, which is less than one half.

References

- Aviles J., Whelan S., Hernke D., et al. (2001) "Intercessory prayer and cardiovascular disease progression in a coronary care unit population: A randomized controlled trial." *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* 76: 1192–1198.
- Benson, H., Dusek, J., Sherwood, J., et al. (2006) "Study of the therapeutic effects of intercessory prayer (STEP) in cardiac bypass patients: A multicenter randomized trial of uncertainty and certainty of receiving intercessory prayer." *American Heart Journal* 151: 934–942.
- Carnap, R. (1962) *Logical Foundations of Probability*, 2nd edn. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Clifford, W. (1999) "The ethics of belief," in T. Madigan (ed.) *The Ethics of Belief and Other Essays* Amherst: Prometheus, 70–96. Original work published 1877.
- Committee of the British Medical Association (1956) "Divine healing: B.M.A. evidence to Archbishops' committee." *British Journal of Medicine* 1(4975), May 12.
- DeRose, K. (2000) "Ought we to follow our evidence?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 60: 697–706.
- Draper, P. (1989) "Pain and pleasure: An evidential problem for theists." *Noûs* 23: 331–350.
- Easwaran, K. and Fitelson, B. (2015) "Accuracy, coherence, and evidence," in T. Szabo-Gendler and J. Hawthorne (eds.) *Oxford Studies in Epistemology*, Vol. 5. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 61–96.
- Feldman, R., and Conee, E. (1985) "Evidentialism." *Philosophical Studies* 48: 15–34.
- Gallup (2014) "In US, 42% believe creationist view of human origins." Available at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/170822/believe-creationist-view-human-origins.aspx> (accessed 18 September 2018).

- Goldman, A. (1979) "What is justified belief?" in G. Pappas (ed.) *Justification and Knowledge*. Dordrecht: Reidel, pp. 1–24.
- Hume, D. (1980) *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. R. Popkin. Indianapolis: Hackett. Original work published 1779.
- Hume, D. (2011) *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Hollywood, FL: Simon & Brown. Original work published 1748.
- James, W. (1896) "The will to believe." *The New World: A Quarterly Review of Religion, Ethics and Theology* 5: 327–337.
- Kaufmann, W. (1971) *Cain and Other Poems*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Kornblith, H. (1980) "Beyond foundationalism and the coherence theory." *Journal of Philosophy* 77: 597–612.
- Krucoff, M., Crater, S., Gallup, D., et al. (2005) "Music, imagery, touch, and prayer as adjuncts to interventional cardiac care: The monitoring and actualisation of noetic trainings (MANTRA) II randomised study." *Lancet* 366: 211–217.
- Locke, J. (1975) *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P. Nidditch. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Original work published 1690.
- Mittag, D. (n.d) "Evidentialism." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <http://www.iep.utm.edu/evidenti/> (accessed 18 September 2018).
- Nickell, J. (1993) *Looking for a Miracle*. Amherst: Prometheus Books.
- Nolen, W. (1974) *Healing: A Doctor in Search of a Miracle*. New York: Random House.
- Randi, J. (1989) *The Faith Healers*. Amherst: Prometheus Books.
- Rose, L. (1968) *Faith Healing*. London: Victor Gollancz.
- Peirce, C. (1931–1958) *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. C. Hartshorne, P. Weiss, and A. Burks. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Plantinga, A., and Tooley, M. (2008) *Knowledge of God*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Tooley, M. (2012) "Inductive logic and the probability that God exists: Farewell to sceptical theism," in J. Chandler and V. Harrison (eds.) *Probability in the Philosophy of Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 144–164.
- Van Inwagen, P. (1996) "It is wrong, everywhere, always, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence," in J. Jordan and D. Howard-Snyder (eds.) *Faith, Freedom and Rationality*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 137–153.
- Vogel, J. (1990) "Cartesian scepticism and inference to the best explanation." *Journal of Philosophy* 87: 658–666.
- West, D. (1957) *Eleven Lourdes Miracles*. London: Gerald Duckworth.
- White, A. (1896) *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology within Christendom* New York: D. Appleton & Co. Reprinted in Great Minds series, Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1993.

Evolution

MICHAEL RUSE

Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist.

Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (1986)

1. Greek Philosophy

Let's start this discussion where one should always start these sorts of discussions, back with the Greeks (Ruse 2017a). There were atheists in Ancient Greece (Ruse 2015). In the *Laws*, Plato proposed severe, isolating penalties for them – pointing to the important fact that discussions about atheism are never purely epistemological but always social and political also. Atheism is seen as disruptive of society. However, for the great Greek philosophers – Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle – it wasn't the social that turned them from non-belief. It was the impossibility of imagining the world we inhabit – especially for Aristotle the world of organisms that we inhabit – without some kind of creative, designing force behind and responsible for everything.

There were philosophies that denied such a designer or Designer. Whether or not they were atheists, the atomists Leucippus and Democritus (a century earlier) had argued that everything is simply the result of chance. You have atoms buzzing about in the void and, every now and then, they join up to make functioning entities, organisms particularly. Their follower, the Roman poet Lucretius (1950), writing several centuries later, gives a good idea of the thinking.

At that time the earth tried to create many monsters
with weird appearance and anatomy –
androgynous, of neither one sex nor the other but somewhere in between;
some footless, or handless;
many even without mouths, or without eyes and blind;

some with their limbs stuck together all along their body,
and thus disabled from doing harm or obtaining anything they needed.
These and other monsters the earth created.
But to no avail, since nature prohibited their development.
They were unable to reach the goal of their maturity,
to find sustenance or to copulate.

De rerum natura, V: 837–848, cited in Sedley 2007, pp. 150–153

At first, nothing works, it is all a dysfunctional mess. Then, given infinite time, there is functional success.

First, the fierce and savage lion species
has been protected by its courage, foxes by cunning, deer by speed of flight.
But as for the light-sleeping minds of dogs, with their faithful heart,
and every kind born of the seed of beasts of burden,
and along with them the wool-bearing flocks and the horned tribes,
they have all been entrusted to the care of the human race

De rerum natura, V: 862–867

I am not sure that you would want to call this an evolutionary picture or even proto-evolutionary. It is certainly not a situation where more sophisticated animals and plants arise from less complex forms, or where there are laws – designed or not – guiding things in any particular direction. Indeed, although these animal forms do work, it is only reluctantly that it is allowed that they might have the kinds of features that we associate with artifacts, that is to say features that bear the marks of design (real or apparent). Lucretius (1950) is eager to draw a line between something that is designed, for instance a bed, and something that comes about by chance, for instance a limb.

Quite different from these are all the things which were first
actually engendered, and gave rise to the preconception of their usefulness later.
Primary in this class are, we can see, the senses and the limbs.
Hence, I repeat, there is no way you can believe
that they were created for their function of utility.

De rerum natura, V: 853–857

What is interesting and prescient is that Lucretius is very much against religion. Not only does he have no need of a God, he doesn't want anything to do with a God. We end up caught in vile theological tangles and the next thing is that we are indulging in disgusting practices like animal sacrifice.

O humankind unhappy! – when it ascribed
Unto divinities such awesome deeds,
And coupled thereto rigours of fierce wrath!
What groans did men on that sad day beget
Even for themselves, and O what wounds for us,
What tears for our children's children! Nor, O man,

Is thy true piety in this: with head
 Under the veil, still to be seen to turn
 Fronting a stone, and ever to approach
 Unto all altars; nor so prone on earth
 Forward to fall, to spread upturned palms
 Before the shrines of gods, nor yet to dew
 Altars with profuse blood of four-foot beasts.

Lucretius 1950, V: 1199–1212

In opposing this kind of thinking, it wasn't that the great philosophers were super-spiritual or anything of that kind. It certainly wasn't that, like today's Creationists, they had it in for evolution because it went against Holy Scripture (Ruse 1988). These were Greeks not Jews and, apart from anything else, they believed in an eternal world – always was, always will be – rather than something that started at some fixed point, when it was made out of nothing by a creator God. It was simply that they just didn't think that you could get things up and running without a designer of some sort.

As always, the truth lies in the details, and there was considerable difference about what was meant by designer "of some sort." For Plato (following Socrates), the designer was an intelligence sufficiently like the Christian God that Augustine was able happily to appropriate the idea and use it as the foundation for the Christian theological perspective he was building around AD 400. In his dialogue the *Phaedo*, Plato wrote:

One day I heard someone reading, as he said, from a book of Anaxagoras, and saying that it is Mind that directs and is the cause of everything. I was delighted with this cause and it seemed to me to be good, in a way, that Mind should be the cause of all. I thought that if this were so, the directing Mind would direct everything and arrange each thing in the way that was best Then if one wished to know the cause of each thing, why it comes to be or perishes or exists, one had to find what the best way was for it to be, or to be acted upon, or to act. (*Phaedo* 97 c–d, Plato 1997, pp. 83–84).

In the *Timaeus*, Plato argued that there was an actual Designer, the Demiurge, that made everything function and work for the good. "Well, if this world of ours is beautiful and its craftsman good, then clearly he looked at the eternal model" (*Timaeus* 29a, Plato 1997, p. 1235). The reference here was to the Platonic theory of forms – the notion of eternal archetypes – discussed most fully in the *Republic*. The forms themselves are hierarchical, with the Form of the Good being the one from which all else stems. In the *Timaeus*, the Demiurge if not the Form of the Good is in some sense a reflection of it, and hence the world – and for Plato this included not just our earth but the whole universe, organic and inorganic – is perfect in some sense.

Aristotle wanted no Designer of this kind, but he still thought there was, as it were, a principle of design infusing reality and making for functioning organisms (Johnson 2005).

The acts in which [the soul] manifests itself are reproduction and the use of food, because for any living thing that has reached its normal development ..., the most natural act is the production of another like itself, an animal producing an animal, a plant a plant, in order that,

as far as nature allows, it may partake in the eternal and divine. That is the goal to which all things strive, that for the sake of which they do whatsoever their nature renders possible. Aristotle, *De Anima* 415a25-415b1 (1984, p. 661).

By “soul” here, Aristotle doesn’t mean the Christian soul – a kind of disembodied mind – but more the whole psychic nature of an animal that makes it a living being. Of course, in the human case (and probably the higher animals) it does include mind. When Aristotle wrote of the “eternal and divine” he referred to a kind of supreme being, totally perfect, to which in some sense all existence strives to get close to and emulate. It is not a designer in the Platonic/Christian sense. For a start, it is probably unaware of our existence, for it spends its time contemplating its own perfect nature!

Modern Science

Whatever the differences, it was this world of design that ruled for two millennia, down to the time of the Scientific Revolution, that change in worldview usually marked by Copernicus at the beginning and Newton at the end. Then there was huge pressure to get design-like thinking out of the sciences. It was not a reversion to atomistic metaphysics, although ideas akin to atomism did start to flourish, but a sense that talking about design was not very helpful scientifically. The world may indeed be like an artifact – it may in fact be God’s artifact – but the drive was to focus on the workings of the machine, and leave the purpose of the machine out of the story. Robert Boyle (1627–1691) was explicit: the world is

like a rare clock, such as may be that at Strasbourg, where all things are so skilfully contrived that the engine being once set a-moving, all things proceed according to the artificer’s first design, and the motions of the little statues that as such hours perform these or those motions do not require (like those of puppets) the peculiar interposing of the artificer or any intelligent agent employed by him, but perform their functions on particular occasions by virtue of the general and primitive contrivance of the whole engine. (Boyle 1996, pp. 12–13)

God, in the metaphor of one of the great historians of the Scientific Revolution, had become a “retired engineer.” But, as Boyle recognized, there was still the problem of organisms. Without bothering about design, it is one thing to focus on the movements of the planets. It is another thing to try the same for organisms. As Boyle wrote in his *Disquisition About the Final Causes of Natural Things* (1688):

For there are some things in nature so curiously contrived, and so exquisitely fitted for certain operations and uses, that it seems little less than blindness in him, that acknowledges, with the Cartesians [followers of René Descartes], a most wise Author of things, not to conclude, that, though they may have been designed for other (and perhaps higher) uses, yet they were designed for this use.

Boyle continued that supposing that “a man’s eyes were made by chance, argues, that they need have no relation to a designing agent; and the use, that a man makes of them,

may be either casual too, or at least may be an effect of his knowledge, not of nature's." Apart from anything else, this takes us from the doing of science – the urge to dissect and to understand how the eye "is as exquisitely fitted to be an organ of sight, as the best artificer in the world could have framed a little engine, purposely and mainly designed for the use of seeing" – but it takes us away from the designing intelligence behind it. (Boyle 1688, pp. 397–398).

Boyle was playing a double game. Boyle ruled design-talk out of physical science but allowed it as part of theology. First:

In the bodies of animals it is oftentimes allowable for a naturalist, from the manifest and apposite uses of the parts, to collect some of the particular ends, to which nature destined them. And in some cases we may, from the known natures, as well as from the structure, of the parts, ground probable conjectures (both affirmative and negative) about the particular offices of the parts (1688, p. 424)

Then, the science finished, one can switch to theology: "It is rational, from the manifest fitness of some things to cosmical or animal ends or uses, to infer, that they were framed or ordained in reference thereunto by an intelligent and designing agent" (1688, 428). From a study in the realm of science of what Boyle would call "contrivance," in the realm of science, to an inference about design – or rather Design – in the realm of theology.

The pattern was now set until the middle of the nineteenth century. As is well known, in the eighteenth century David Hume, in his 1779 *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, went after arguments for the existence of God, although in the end he seemed to allow that there still might be something out there.

If the whole of natural theology, as some people seem to maintain, boils down to one simple, though somewhat ambiguous or at least undefined proposition: The cause or causes of order in the universe probably bear some remote analogy to human intelligence; if this proposition can't be extended, varied, or explained in more detail; if it yields no inference that affects human life or can be the source of any action or forbearance from acting; and if the analogy, imperfect as it is, extends only to human intelligence, and can't plausibly be transferred to the other qualities of the mind – if all this really is the case, what can the most curious, thoughtful, and religious man do except give a plain, philosophical assent to the proposition as often as it comes up, and believe that the arguments on which it is based outweigh the objections against it? (Hume 1990, pp. 203–204)

This passage has led some readers to suggest that Hume looks upon the Design Argument less as one of analogy – the world is like a clock, clocks have clock makers/designers, hence the world has a maker/designer – and more one of abduction or inference to the best explanation. It is the argument used by Sherlock Holmes in *The Sign of the Four*: "How often have I said to you that when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, *however improbable*, must be the truth?" The nature of the world, organisms in particular, demands an explanation. There is no other explanation than a Designer. Blind chance will not do. The only other alternative seems to be that of Kant, who simply refused to allow proper (meaning scientific) explanations of the design-like nature of the world. Famously, he said there will never be a Newton of the blade of grass.

In his convoluted way, Kant said we can think of design for heuristic purposes but not for real explanation.

The concept of a thing as in itself a natural end is therefore not a constitutive concept of the understanding or of reason, but it can still be a regulative concept for the reflecting power of judgment, for guiding research into objects of this kind and thinking over their highest ground in accordance with a remote analogy with our own causality in accordance with ends; not, of course, for the sake of knowledge of nature or of its original ground, but rather for the sake of the very same practical faculty of reason in us in analogy with which we consider the cause of that purposiveness. (Kant 2000, p. 247))

Of course, no one was fooled. The child of Pietists surely thought that God stood behind everything. It was just that he could not be brought into a scientific explanation.

Just Before Darwin

We enter the nineteenth century and the run up to Charles Darwin and his *Origin of Species*. Let us remind ourselves of the point made about the atheism question being as much political as epistemological. We see the truth of this here. From the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century to the defeat of Napoleon and the subsequent rise of the British empire in the nineteenth century, the British felt hemmed in and threatened by the great powers on the Continent (Colley 1992). The ideology of being British – being distinctively British Protestant – was vital. Part of being British Protestant was by hewing to the *via media* between the authority of Rome and the biblical literalism of Geneva, which, thanks to John Knox, was also the religion of Scotland. Natural theology, especially arguments from design, took on special significance. Atheism wasn't just wrong. It was disloyal. People often express surprise that, a mere twenty years after David Hume had published devastating critiques of arguments for the existence of God, Archdeacon William Paley calmly reaffirmed the design-like nature of the world in his *Natural Theology* (1802) – a textbook that became standard fare for students right through the nineteenth and even into the twentieth century. There should be no surprise at all. The French Revolution had just occurred, showing how badly things can get out of hand, and Napoleon had arrived on the scene and was clearly intent on conquering Europe. Paley was comfort food at a time when it was badly needed.

Move to the middle of the nineteenth century and the decade before the *Origin*. By this time, despite the sunny optimism of Paley, religion – Christianity in particular – was creaking. First and foremost, there was German so-called “higher criticism,” applying to sacred scripture the same analytic tools of deconstruction as scholars did to other ancient manuscripts. Before long, it became very clear that not much was literal and much was, to say the least, highly metaphorical. The savior from Nazareth was looking a lot more human and a lot less divine. Second, religion in the new urban age simply didn't seem all that relevant. It might have worked in the village, under the suzerainty of the squire and the parson, but in the city in the alienating factory, it had less and less traction. People wanted a soccer game on a Sunday, not church. Charles Dickens picked

up on this: in *Hard Times*, published in 1854, he wrote of the churches of Coketown – a fictionalized version of a city like Manchester or Birmingham – that:

[T]he perplexing mystery of the place was, Who belonged to the eighteen denominations? Because, whoever did, the labouring people did not. It was very strange to walk through the streets on a Sunday morning, and note how few of *them* the barbarous jangling of bells that was driving the sick and nervous mad, called away from their own quarter, from their own close rooms, from the corners of their own streets, where they lounged listlessly, gazing at all the church and chapel going, as at a thing with which they had no manner of concern. (Dickens 1948, p. 23)

It wasn't just the growing social irrelevance of Christianity. It was that the story was failing to engage (Ruse 2017b).

Third, the theology was crumbling. The story of revealed theology – the story of faith – is of humans made in the image of God but fallen, and of God so loving us that he came in the form of the Christ and died in agony on the cross for our salvation. The story of natural theology – the story of evidence and reason – is of a world of design pointing to the deity. But increasingly people asked if it was a world of design? What, for instance, of the millions and millions of other suns and planets that science had revealed. What is their point in the divine plan? Do they house human-like creatures, and if they don't why do they exist and if they do does this mean that Jesus was appearing on them too? Was he being crucified every Friday somewhere in the universe? Surely not. Writing in 1853, William Whewell (2001), historian and philosopher of science and Master of Trinity College Cambridge, pointed to the fact that many things already seem without purpose – the similarities between mammalian skeletons (homologies) seem to have little point. Why should the forelimb of man, of horse, of bird, of bat, of porpoise, all be isomorphic? And if there is not point to them, why should there be point to the rest of the universe? Which is all very well, but then you begin to wonder what kind of designing God we are talking about in the first place.

Charles Darwin

So we come to Charles Darwin and the *Origin of Species* (1859; see Ruse 1979). He was not the first evolutionist – his physician grandfather Erasmus Darwin was one of a number in the eighteenth century who led the way – but he is rightly known as the “father” of evolution for two reasons. First, he gave a mechanism of change – natural selection – one that today professional evolutionists accept as the chief cause behind the history of life, from the most primitive to today's range of complex organisms. Second, he gave reasons to think that the very fact of evolution itself is well grounded, so much so that almost overnight it became nigh commonsensical (Ruse 1975). Taking these in turn, natural selection is the analogical equivalent of the practice of breeders and farmers, when they select to produce ever-better quality stock or more desired objects (plants and animals) of pleasure. To get a natural equivalent of this artificial selection, Darwin turned to the political economist Thomas Robert Malthus who, worried about

overpopulation, pointed out that space and food limitations would soon lead to conflict and restriction. Darwin wrote:

A struggle for existence inevitably follows from the high rate at which all organic beings tend to increase. Every being, which during its natural lifetime produces several eggs or seeds, must suffer destruction during some period of its life, and during some season or occasional year, otherwise, on the principle of geometrical increase, its numbers would quickly become so inordinately great that no country could support the product. Hence, as more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence, either one individual with another of the same species, or with the individuals of distinct species, or with the physical conditions of life. (Darwin 1859, pp. 63–64)

Then, taking advantage of the insight that in all natural populations of organisms new variations are constantly appearing, Darwin moved on to natural selection.

Let it be borne in mind how infinitely complex and close-fitting are the mutual relations of all organic beings to each other and to their physical conditions of life. Can it, then, be thought improbable, seeing that variations useful to man have undoubtedly occurred, that other variations useful in some way to each being in the great and complex battle of life, should sometimes occur in the course of thousands of generations? If such do occur, can we doubt (remembering that many more individuals are born than can possibly survive) that individuals having any advantage, however slight, over others, would have the best chance of surviving and of procreating their kind? On the other hand, we may feel sure that any variation in the least degree injurious would be rigidly destroyed. This preservation of favorable variations and the rejection of injurious variations, I call Natural Selection. (Darwin 1859, pp. 80–81)

Now, with natural selection under his belt, as it were, Darwin could turn to his second task, making the very fact of evolution something compelling to any reasonable person. To this end, he ran the gamut, starting with social behavior, and why it is that insects like the ants and the bees have the complex systems that one finds in nature. Then, on through paleontology and the fossil record, stressing how we move from the simple to the complex as we rise up through the geological layers, and also how organisms further down often are more generalized, showing shared features of groups that later diverge and that overall are quite different. Next to geographical distribution – why, except through evolution, is it that the organisms on the Galapagos archipelago in the Pacific look like South American forms, and the organisms on the Canary islands in the Atlantic look like African forms? Through classification and morphology – those homologies that Whewell (2001) seized on are clear evidence of shared ancestry – and so to development and why organisms very different as adults, nevertheless have embryos that are virtually indistinguishable. Answer: selection acts on the adults tearing them apart but on the embryos little or not at all. With vestigial and useless organs, like the appendix, the story was complete.

Let me make three points. Natural selection didn't just lead to change, but to change of a particular kind. It made for features, characteristics, like the hand and the eye, that would help in the struggle for existence and reproduction. These "adaptations" are

design-like. In other words, as Sherlock Holmes would have appreciated, David Hume did not get the impossible quite right. It is possible to have a natural, law-bound, non-God-driven process making design-like effects. A deity is not essential. In this respect, Richard Dawkins is right. Darwin did make it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist.

Second, people spotted this implication immediately. Recently, among historians of evolutionary theory, there has been an awful lot of talk about non-Darwinian revolutions, and Darwinian non-revolutions, and so forth (Ruse 2005a; Richards and Ruse 2016). There is some basis for this kind of talk. It has been noted already that Darwin was not the first evolutionist, so whatever he did that might have been revolutionary it was not inventing the idea of evolution. Then, after the *Origin*, quite apart from the people who would not have anything to do with evolution – comparatively not a huge number, although as we all know they have persisted down to this day and age – many people embraced mechanisms other than selection, like Lamarckism, the inheritance of acquired characteristics. At the beginning of the new century, with the coming of Mendelian genetics, others took this new theory to be a rival to Darwinism, and it was not until around 1930 that Darwinian natural selection finally came into its own as a fully functioning mechanism, as it is so regarded today. However, everyone knew that Darwin had changed the picture. God was no longer compelling. In important ways, we are on our own. In 1866, Thomas Hardy, the poet and novelist and until 1859 a good Anglican, wrote a sonnet on these matters.

If but some vengeful god would call to me
From up the sky, and laugh: "Thou suffering thing,
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,
That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting!"

Had willed and meted me the tears I shed.
Then would I bear it, clench myself, and die,
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?
– Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan...
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.

Hardy 1994, p. 5)

Note that it is not that God is nasty. Hardy could handle that. It is that God is nonexistent. Instead of Divine Providence, we have Purblind Doomsters.

The third point is that Darwin made it possible not to believe in God, but for many who moved to non-belief in the post-*Origin* years, as in the pre-*Origin* years, it was usually not science primarily that spurred the change (Ruse 2005b). Changing social conditions made it hard for many people to accept the Christian claim that non-believers

are condemned to an eternity of pain and suffering simply because they are non-believers. Darwin thought his own father and brother two of the finest men he knew. Thus, to condemn them because of their non-belief would be positively immoral. Darwin wanted no part of any God such as this. Combined with this is the fact that few people – Darwin again – wanted to go all of the way to outright atheism. They were happy to stop at what Darwin's great supporter Thomas Henry Huxley labelled "agnosticism" – they simply didn't know. That didn't mean they were secret Christians – or atheists – they just didn't know. So people certainly did not see Darwinism as necessitating atheism. Simply making non-belief possible.

Combined with this, perhaps as a fourth point, many believers welcomed Darwin, paradoxical as it may seem. On the one hand, it showed that God is even greater than they had supposed. He did not need miracles to create the world. He could do it all through law. Entirely typical was the brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the high-as-famous preacher Henry Ward Beecher.

If single acts would evince design, how much more a vast universe, that by inherent laws gradually builded itself, and then created its own plants and animals, a universe so adjusted that it left by the way the poorest things, and steadily wrought toward more complex, ingenious, and beautiful results! Who designed this mighty machine, created matter, gave to it its laws, and impressed upon it that tendency which has brought forth the almost infinite results on the globe, and wrought them into a perfect system? Design by wholesale is grander than design by retail" (Beecher 1885, p. 113).

On the other hand, even before the *Origin*, there was a move away from natural theology. The Danish theologian/philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1985) wrote in 1843 of a "leap of faith" into the absurd, meaning that if you could prove the existence and nature of God, then really faith is downgraded. This has been a powerful line of thought in twentieth-century theology, particularly through the writings of the Swiss theologian Karl Barth (1933). Catholics have stood strong on natural theology – Aquinas is their official philosopher – but, even there, some deep thinkers have questioned the blind veneration of design, and rather welcomed Darwin. John Henry Newman, who moved from an Evangelical Anglican childhood to being a prince of the Church of Rome, was one: "I believe in design because I believe in God; not in a God because I see design" (Newman 1973, p. 97). He continued: "Design teaches me power, skill and goodness – not sanctity, not mercy, not a future judgment, which three are of the essence of religion."

Darwinism and Christianity

With the arrival of Darwin and the *Origin*, let us move from a historical mode to a more analytical mode. Where do we stand today? Darwinian evolution through natural selection, backed by the findings of molecular biology, is today what we might call – to use a hackneyed term – the standard paradigm (Ruse 2006). What implications does this have for atheism, or – turning the question around – what implications does this have for religion? Our question now is about religion that is in some fairly strong form theistic, or at least deistic – we are not now talking about the essentials of Buddhism

and other Eastern religions, although often they believe in deities if not a creator God. For convenience, let us focus on Christianity, with an eye at least on the other Abrahamic religions, Judaism and Islam.

Start at the beginning. If you accept Darwinian theory, then you cannot accept the bible taken literally. The earth is not six thousand years old, God did not create all organisms in the first week, there was no universal flood, languages did not come into being because humans got a bit arrogant, and so on and so forth. So, clearly, if your theism is theism centered on that kind of God of a literalistic reading of the bible, Darwinism points to atheism (Whitcomb and Morris 1961). But, of course, although there are many literalists and although their numbers seem to be growing – especially in Judaism and Islam – many if not most theists do not accept this kind of God. They agree with Augustine (1982) that the bible is often written metaphorically or allegorically, if only because the ancient Jews were ignorant of science and would not have understood things taken literally in the light of modern knowledge. Not that anyone has ever been a strict literalist anyway. No one thinks the biblical Whore of Babylon (*Revelation*, Chapters 17 and 18) is an actual woman – she represents the pope, or the Catholic Church, or Saladin, or Islam. Take your pick.

What is the next step out – or down or up or whatever? What of those who may be quite willing to go with science some part of the way – old earth for example and a fair amount of evolution. They may not care too much about arks and floods. But they don't think natural selection can do it all on its own. They want to supplement the course of evolution with guided mutations, with God intervening every now and then providing fortuitous variations and thus creating and guaranteeing the design-like nature of organisms. This group goes all the way from (at least in the past) fairly conventional scientists like Darwin's American supporter, the Harvard botanist Asa Gray (1876), who argued for guided mutations, through people today like the Christian physicist Robert J. Russell (2008), who argues that God directs mutations down at the quantum level where necessarily we cannot spot or time their occurrence, to those right out on the fringe who support so-called Intelligent Design theory, where a designer steps right on it and creates whole, new, complex, functioning systems (Johnson 1991; Behe 1996; Dembski 1999; Dembski and Ruse 2004). This last group often deny that their designer is necessarily the Christian God, but you can be certain that He or he or it is not some grad student on Andromeda fiddling around with planet earth as part of a doctoral dissertation. Obviously, if you think Darwinism is true and adequate, you are denying the existence of the kind of deity that these various positions suppose – or deities if they are sufficiently different each to demand their own God. I will not spend time discussing the positions further, except to say that conventional scientists have shown there is massive counter-evidence to all of these proposals (Pennock 1998; Miller 1999; Pennock and Ruse 2008) – with the possible exception of Russell's, which is framed in such a way as to be immune from falsification and hence not real science, and hence no real competitor to Darwinism – or anything else, to be quite frank. I will note that, science apart, they bring on massive theological difficulties, starting with the fact that if God is willing to intervene to create the bacterium flagellum (an IDT favorite), why then is he not willing to intervene to prevent some of the horrendous genetic diseases that can condemn people to lifetimes of suffering and misery? Not much of the all-powerful, all-loving Christian God apparent here.

Next in line is the religion of a traditional Protestant or Catholic or equivalent in other branches of Christianity or other religions. One takes the more outlandish biblical claims metaphorically – one thinks them true but not literally true – but when matters get serious one is fairly literalistic. So, for instance, one might appreciate, even love (as I do), the story of Ruth – thinking it painfully accurate about human nature – without necessarily thinking there were historical figures of Ruth and Naomi and Boaz. But when it comes to Jesus, one believes that he really was crucified and that he really did rise from the dead on the third day. John Henry Newman is right. At one level, Darwinism doesn't have a dog in this fight. Yet, at another level, perhaps it does. The big question is about miracles. If you understand these as genuine violations of the laws of nature – one moment Lazarus was dead and stinking and the next moment he was alive and well – then these surely go against at least the spirit of science, including Darwinian science, if not are totally prohibited. So, Darwinism does suggest no Christian God.

There are two ways out of this (Ruse 2001). The first is to say simply that the miracles occurred but they do not affect the normal workings of nature, including natural selection. God can do what he wants and this is what he wants. Doing regular science, there is no reason to think that miracles are going to upset the applecart. There are modest and less modest versions of this view. The modest version says that miracles were necessary for the salvation story – resurrection and so forth – but that outside of that you should be wary if not outrightly hostile to miracle claims. This I think would be the position of most Protestants. The less modest version says that miracles are ongoing, and there were for example two genuine miracles that testified to the appropriateness of sainthood for John Paul II. I suspect that most Protestants, whatever they thought of JP II, think that that kind of argument is a good reason to be modest. The other escape route is simply to assimilate miracles to the laws of nature. What is important about a miracle is not violating the laws of nature but its meaning. Dunkirk, when the British Army escaped in the spring of 1940, was probably entirely law-bound; but, when I was a child, the unusually calm sea was taken as a miracle on account of its meaning – it allowed the British to regroup and return to fight the Nazi foe. When I was a Junior Young Friend, we infant Quakers were taught that the physical resurrection was irrelevant. What counted was that a group of people, with very good reason to be disheartened, suddenly realized in their hearts that their savior lived. Enough said.

Issues in Need of Resolution

Even if one resolves the miracles issue to one's own satisfaction, there are other issues that need resolving on the Darwinism–Christianity (or other religions) interface. Here are three. First, what of the problem of evil? Darwin himself recognized that, at the least, his theory exacerbates it. "I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent & omnipotent God would have designedly created the *Ichneumonidae* with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars, or that a cat should play with mice" (Letter to Asa Gray, 22, May 1860, in Burkhardt et al. 1985, Vol. 8, p. 224). Richard Dawkins, picking at this scab, introduces the notion of a "utility function," the end purpose being intended in animal behavior and nature. Focusing on the cheetah/antelope interaction, Dawkins asks: "What was God's utility function?" Cheetahs seem

superbly designed to kill antelopes. “The teeth, claws, eyes, nose, leg muscles, backbone and brain of a cheetah are all precisely what we should expect if God’s purpose in designing cheetahs was to maximize deaths among antelopes.” Conversely, “we find equally impressive evidence of design for precisely the opposite end: the survival of antelopes and starvation among cheetahs.” Do we have two gods, making the different animals, which then compete? If we are restricted to one god, what on earth is happening? Why is this god creating in this way? “Is He a sadist who enjoys spectator blood sports? Is He trying to avoid overpopulation in the mammals of Africa? Is He manoeuvring to maximize David Attenborough’s television ratings?” (Dawkins 1995, p. 105).

The problem of evil is a major philosophical/theological problem for the Christian – with one of Dostoevsky’s characters, I don’t even want the problem solved thus letting God off the hook – Darwinism does not necessarily exacerbate it. Divide evil, as is done traditionally, into natural and moral evil, where the former is evil coming from natural causes (like the Lisbon earthquake) and the latter is evil coming from humans (like Auschwitz). In the former case – which incidentally is no problem for non-theistic religions like Buddhism – one can argue – as Richard Dawkins of all people has argued – that natural selection is the only law-bound way to get design-like effects. The pain and suffering caused by the struggle for existence is simply part of the cost of getting animals and plants up and running. God cannot make $2 + 2 = 5$ and God cannot make organisms without selection. Omnipotence does not stretch that far. In the latter case, Darwinism rather expects humans to be a mixture of good and bad. We evolved to be co-operators – altruism is a powerful adaptation brought on by natural selection – but, given selection, one expects people always to be looking out for self, and so evil occurs. Don’t forget that much evil is not just a matter of biology, Darwinian or otherwise, but also technology. The genes may have given a capacity to regard Jews as outsiders, as non-people, but it was cranked up by propaganda using radio and film and the like. Hence, although I am not sure how far one wants to say that Darwinism ameliorates the problem of evil, it is not quite as negative as it is often taken to be.

Second, there is the Adam and Eve problem. Western Christianity generally follows the Augustinian line that we are tainted with original sin because of the sins of Adam and Eve, disobeying God (Augustine (1982), pp. 413-426). The newborn babe is hardly a sinner but it is inclined that way, and it doesn’t take long for the ill behavior to manifest itself. Unfortunately, if you take Darwinism seriously, there was no historical Adam and Eve. Human evolution may well have gone through bottlenecks – that would explain why there isn’t really that much variation in the human species – but never less than about ten thousand members. It may well be that one member of that group is the ancestor of us all – Mitochondrial Eve – but almost certainly there were others too. More than this, it is inconceivable that one person or two people at one time sinned and that was it. Their parents would have been no less sinful than they and the same goes for siblings and other family members – for the whole group indeed. So quite apart from the dicey theology which has never appealed to the Orthodox Church – why should one person’s taking an apple somewhere, sometime, have any knock-on effect on me? – Darwinism totally negates this interpretation. Recently, one eminent theologian was fired from Calvin College for doubting the historical authenticity of the first couple (Ruse 2011). Bullying doesn’t change things. Either you change your Christianity or Darwinism denies your religion. Of course, there are options – for instance that Adam

and Eve are metaphorical and really humans are developmental, neither good nor bad but striving for the former – but something must be done if you accept Darwinism.

The third point is about the very evolution of humans. There is, particularly today, much discussion about whether God cares equally for all organisms – not a sparrow falls, and so forth – or whether humans have some unique special relationship – made in the image of God. One thing is certain. Christianity – with other Abrahamic religions – does not regard the existence of humans as contingent. At least, not in the sense that God's creation looked upon us as an option. God wanted us, creatures that he could love and that in return could love and worship. However, Darwinian evolution is essentially directionless. There is no necessary course to evolution. Natural selection is opportunistic. What is best for one situation is not necessary best for another. If foodstuffs are abundant, being big might be an adaptive advantage. If food is scarce, go small. You might think that big brains always are to be preferred, but they have their costs – starting with the need of large quantities of protein (the bodies of other animals) to keep them going. A lot of the time evolution points the other way. In the colorful words of the paleontologist Jack Sepkoski: "I see intelligence as just one of a variety of adaptations among tetrapods for survival. Running fast in a herd while being as dumb as shit, I think, is a very good adaptation for survival" (quoted in Ruse 1996, p. 486).

Is there any good Darwinian way to deal with this problem? Robert Russell's solution, introducing guided mutations at the quantum level, is unacceptable. You need a naturalistic response. Richard Dawkins is an enthusiast for progress up to humankind. "Directionalist common sense surely wins on the very long time scale: once there was only blue-green slime and now there are sharp-eyed metazoa" (Dawkins and Krebs 1979, p. 508). Dawkins is keen on innovations, what he has called the "evolution of evolvability."

Notwithstanding [Stephen Jay] Gould's just skepticism over the tendency to label each era by its newest arrivals, there really is a good possibility that major innovations in embryological technique open up new vistas of evolutionary possibility and that these constitute genuinely progressive improvements The origin of the chromosome, of the bounded cell, of organized meiosis, diploidy and sex, of the eucaryotic cell, of multicellularity, of gastrulation, of molluscan torsion, of segmentation – each of these may have constituted a watershed event in the history of life. Not just in the normal Darwinian sense of assisting individuals to survive and reproduce, but watershed in the sense of boosting evolution itself in ways that seem entitled to the label progressive. It may well be that after, say, the invention of multicellularity, or the invention of metamerism, evolution was never the same again. In this sense, there may be a one-way ratchet of progressive innovation in evolution. (Dawkins 1997, pp. 1019–1020)

Dawkins makes much of so-called biological arms races, where lines of organisms compete – the prey gets faster and so the predator gets faster. Today's arms races are ever increasingly electronic as both sides build ever-bigger and more powerful computers. Likewise in the animal world. Referring to something called the Encephalization Quotient (EQ), a kind of cross-species IQ equivalent, Dawkins writes:

The fact that humans have an EQ of 7 and hippos an EQ of 0.3 may not literally mean that humans are 23 times as clever as hippos! But the EQ as measured is probably telling us *something* about how much "computing power" an animal probably has in its head,

over and above the irreducible amount of computing power needed for the routine running of its large or small body. (Dawkins 1986, p. 189).

What that “something” might be is left as an exercise for the reader!

Frankly, I am not sure that any of this gives you the cast-iron guarantee of human emergence, which I think adherence to Abrahamic religion demands. Nor am I more impressed by the other popular solution, found in early writings of Stephen Jay Gould (1985) but developed by English paleontologist Simon Conway Morris (2003). This approach focuses on ecological niches, arguing that these exist independently of organisms, waiting to be discovered and occupied, and since the existence of humans shows that there was a niche for culture, it was only a matter of time before it was discovered and occupied:

[G]iven time, evolution will inevitably lead not only to the emergence of such properties as intelligence, but also to other complexities, such as, say, agriculture and culture, that we tend to regard as the prerogative of the human ... We may be unique, but paradoxically those properties that define our uniqueness can still be inherent in the evolutionary process. In other words, if we humans had not evolved then something more-or-less identical would have emerged sooner or later. (Conway Morris 2003, p. 196).

Obviously, this solution depends on the assumption that there are independently existing niches and that they will inevitably be discovered. I am not convinced that either of these claims are sufficiently well established to give the religious the inevitability they demand.

An alternative solution that does seem to work relies on the notion of the multiverse. Since we humans have evolved through natural selection, it is clear that we humans could have evolved through natural selection. If there were an infinite number of universes then presumably, at some point at some time, we would have evolved. Monkeys striking the keys randomly could type Shakespeare given enough chances. If Augustine (1982, p. 396) is right and God is outside space and time, it is not as if he is sitting around waiting for humans to evolve. Our now is his now. Of course, this solution depends on the perhaps iffy notion of multiverses and clearly there are going to be many botched attempts along the way. But as Whewell pointed out (2001), there is a lot of waste already, so perhaps a bit – a huge amount – more is all part of the divine plan. Humans had to evolve. At somewhat of a cost, you can fix it up so Darwinism will guarantee this.

Summing Up

So, where are we at the end? Gould was right. After Darwin, justifiable atheism was possible. However, with the limitations and constraints noted, it doesn't seem that Darwinism necessitates atheism. Does this then mean that one should believe in the existence of a God? Not at all. The pertinent point is that the arguments from here on are going to be more philosophical or theological than Darwin-based (Ruse 2015). I regard myself as an atheist with respect to Christianity, one major reason being the

incompatibility of the Greek notion of God – as an eternal being outside time and space – the notion favored by Catholics, and the Jewish notion of God – as a person who cares for us as does a father – the notion favored by Protestants. This is not an evolution-based reason. However, I draw back from absolute atheism and move towards agnosticism, because (unlike some philosophers, including Wittgenstein) I regard the fundamental question – why is there something rather than nothing? – to be a genuine question (Ruse 2010); and, although drawn to panpsychism, I see no solution to the body–mind problem, and that suggests that the world is a lot more mysterious than I can fathom (Ruse 2017b). Again, these are philosophical worries not those of biology.

In the end, it seems that Dawkins is right about Darwinism and atheism, but that is the beginning rather than the end of the story.

References

- Aristotle (1984) *Complete Works*, ed. J. Barnes. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Augustine (1982) *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. J. Taylor. New York: Newman.
- Barth, K. (1933) *The Epistle to the Romans*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Beecher, H. (1885) *Evolution and Religion*. New York: Fords, Howard & Hulbert.
- Behe, M. (1996) *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*. New York: Free Press.
- Boyle, R. (1688) *A Disquisition About the Final Causes of Natural Things: Wherein it is Inquir'd Whether, And (if at all) with What Cautions, a Naturalist should admit Them?* London: John Taylor.
- Boyle, R. (1996) *A Free Enquiry into the Vulgarly Received Notion of Nature*, ed. E. Davis and M. Hunter. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Original work published 1686.
- Burkhardt, F., et al. (eds) (1985–) *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Colley, L. (1992) *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Conway Morris, S. (2003) *Life's Solution: Inevitable Humans in a Lonely Universe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Darwin, C. (1859) *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. London: John Murray.
- Dawkins, R. (1986) *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe Without Design*. London: W. W. Norton.
- Dawkins, R. (1995) *A River Out of Eden*. New York: Basic Books.
- Dawkins, R. (1997) "Human chauvinism: Review of *Full House* by Stephen Jay Gould." *Evolution* 51: 1015–1020.
- Dawkins, R., and Krebs, J. (1979) "Arms races between and within species." *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London B*, 205: 489–511.
- Dembski, W. (1999) *Intelligent Design: The Bridge Between Science and Theology*. Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press.
- Dembski, W., and Ruse, M. (eds.) (2004) *Debating Design: Darwin to DNA*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dickens, C. (1948) *Hard Times*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Original work published 1854.
- Gould, S. (1985) "SETI and the Wisdom of Casey Stengel," in *The Flamingo's Smile*. New York: Norton, pp. 403–413.
- Gray, A. (1876) *Darwiniana*. New York: D. Appleton.
- Hardy, T. (1994) *Collected Poems*. Ware: Wordsworth Poetry Library.
- Hume, D. (1990) *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. M. Bell. London: Penguin. Original work published 1779.

- Johnson, P. (1991) *Darwin on Trial*. Washington: Regnery Gateway.
- Johnson, M. (2005) *Aristotle on Teleology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kant, I. (2000) *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. P. Guyer, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Original work published 1790.
- Kierkegaard, S. (1985) *Fear and Trembling*, trans. with an introduction by A. Hannay. London: Penguin. Original work published 1843.
- Lucretius (1950) *Of the Nature of Things*, trans. W. Leonard. Everyman's Library. London: Dutton.
- Miller, K. (1999) *Finding Darwin's God*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Newman, J. (1973) *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, Vol. XXV, ed. C. Dessain and T. Gornall. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Paley, W. (1802) *Collected Works*, Vol. IV, *Natural Theology*. London: Rivington.
- Pennock, R. (1998) *Tower of Babel: Scientific Evidence and the New Creationism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Pennock, R., and Ruse, M. (eds.) (2008) *But is it Science? The Philosophical Question in the Creation/Evolution Controversy*, 2nd edn. Amherst: Prometheus Books.
- Plato (1997) *Complete Works*, ed. J. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Richards, R., and Ruse, M. (2016) *Debating Darwin*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ruse, M. (1975) "Charles Darwin's theory of evolution: An analysis." *Journal of the History of Biology* 8: 219–241.
- Ruse, M. (1979) *The Darwinian Revolution: Science Red in Tooth and Claw*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ruse, M. (ed.) (1988) *But is it Science? The Philosophical Question in the Creation/Evolution Controversy*. Amherst: Prometheus Books.
- Ruse, M. (1996) *Monad to Man: The Concept of Progress in Evolutionary Biology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ruse, M. (2001) *Can a Darwinian be a Christian? The Relationship between Science and Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ruse, M. (2005a) "The Darwinian Revolution as seen in 1979 and as seen twenty-five years later in 2004." *Journal of the History of Biology* 38: 3–17.
- Ruse, M. (2005b) *The Evolution–Creation Struggle*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ruse, M. (2006) *Darwinism and its Discontents*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ruse, M. (2010) *Science and Spirituality: Making Room for Faith in the Age of Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ruse, M. (2011) "The shame of Calvin College." *Brainstorm: Chronicle of Higher Education*, 20 July. Available at <http://www.chronicle.com/blogs/brainstorm/the-shame-of-calvin-college/37484> (accessed 18 September 2018).
- Ruse, M. (2015) *Atheism: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ruse, M. (2017a) *On Purpose*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ruse, M. (2017b) *Darwinism as Religion: What Literature Tells Us about Evolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Russell, R. (2008) *Cosmology: From Alpha to Omega: The Creative Mutual Interaction of Theology and Science*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Sedley, D. (2007) *Creationism and its Critics in Antiquity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Whewell, W. (2001) *Of the Plurality of Worlds. A Facsimile of the First Edition of 1853: Plus Previously Unpublished Material Excised by the Author Just Before the Book Went to Press; and Whewell's Dialogue Rebutting His Critics, Reprinted from the Second Edition*, ed. M. Ruse. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Original work published 1853.
- Whitcomb, J., and Morris, H. (1961) *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and its Scientific Implications*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company.

Part VI

Ethics

Meta-Ethics

ELIZABETH TROPMAN

Meta-ethics is a subdiscipline of ethics that asks second-order questions about first-order moral thought. Central meta-ethical questions include the following. Is the function of moral discourse to describe moral facts or express feelings? Are moral statements true or false and, if so, is moral truth objective? Is moral knowledge possible? How do moral judgments motivate us to act? These questions are meta-ethical rather than ethical because they do not concern what is morally right, wrong, good, or bad. Substantive ethical theorizing is largely the task of normative ethics, not meta-ethics.

A commitment to atheism may affect how one answers meta-ethical questions. If God does not exist, this could make certain positions in meta-ethics more or less plausible. If atheism effectively rules out options in meta-ethics that we want to respect, this would be a count against atheism. Similarly, if atheism helps us see how an appealing meta-ethical position could be true, this would be a point in atheism's favor. The same considerations apply to theism. Theists also find themselves in better or worse positions with respect to various meta-ethical theories. In the debate between theism and atheism, meta-ethics offers each side advantages and disadvantages.

This chapter considers a range of views in meta-ethics and assesses their implications for atheism. This investigation will be comparative in nature. It is necessary to consider the relative merits of adopting a theistic worldview over an atheistic one – as far as meta-ethics goes – and vice versa. One conclusion of this chapter is that while some meta-ethical arguments against atheism are more compelling than others, atheists can almost always mount a promising line of defense. When critics object to atheism on the grounds that it would preclude certain meta-ethical positions, atheists can show that their view is not so incompatible with the meta-ethical stance after all. Many of the meta-ethical challenges we will consider also are not unique to atheism. If it can be shown that theists frequently have just as hard a time, if not a harder one, explaining the truth of plausible meta-ethical positions, this would also protect atheists from the charge that there is something especially meta-ethically troubling with their worldview.

Moral Objectivity

A key meta-ethical criticism of atheism is that it cannot respect the objectivity of morality. If accepting atheism means giving up on moral objectivity, this – for many commentators – would be a high price to pay. Those who think that morality is objective believe that moral requirements are not up to us; moral obligations would be as they are irrespective of our thoughts or feelings on the matter. For objectivists, lying, cheating, and stealing would still be wrong even if we thought otherwise or approved of these actions.

The meta-ethical view that morality is objective is commonly known as “moral realism.” Moral realists hold, first, that there are some facts or truths about what is right or wrong, and second, that these facts or truths are objective. I will have more to say about moral objectivity below, but for now, the general idea is that objective moral facts obtain independently of our beliefs or attitudes about them.

Moral realism is often seen as the default meta-ethical position (see Brink 1989). It is natural to suppose that some actions are morally right or wrong, and that an action’s morality is something we discover, not create. Moral realism is appealing because it makes sense of moral error, moral progress, and the authority of moral demands. Since morality is not up to us, it is possible for us to make moral mistakes and genuinely disagree about what is morally right or wrong.

Atheism initially looks ill-suited to capture the truth of moral realism. Suppose that God does not exist. There is no afterlife and nor are there any supernatural entities. It can be hard to see how objective moral requirements could exist in a naturalistic world. What could make lying, promise-breaking, and coercion morally forbidden, and objectively so? Moral requirements are supposed to be independent of us, so lying could not be wrong because we say so or because our society disapproves of lies. Atheists will claim that lying is wrong in virtue of some other feature, such as causing pain or disrespecting persons, but this only pushes the question back one step. Why is it wrong to bring about pain or disrespect persons? All that the atheist can say is that these basic action types are wrong because they are, but this is not very satisfying.

In contrast, theists seem to have a ready explanation for why certain actions would be objectively wrong: they are wrong because God forbids them. Divine command theory is the view that an action is morally right if and only if God commands it and morally wrong if and only if God forbids it, where God’s commanding an action is the reason it is morally right and God’s forbidding an action the reason it is morally wrong. Divine commands fix the content of morality. While some theists tie morality to states other than God’s commands, such as his will, preferences, or motives, the differences among such theories will not matter for our purposes.

On divine command theory, we are morally required to tell the truth because and only insofar as God commands us to be truthful. A divine command theory can help us see how there could be genuine moral requirements that are not up to us. These rules are put in place by God’s decree, and they obtain irrespective of our thoughts and feelings about what is moral. This theistic account of morality looks much more illuminating than the atheist’s. Indeed, the atheist really has no explanation for why certain objective basic moral prescriptions are true; the atheist is just confident that they are.

Atheists who want to be realists will rightly protest that it is not so troubling that basic moral duties are brutally, inexplicably true. Explanations have to come to an

end somewhere. Other areas of thought, such as science and logic, countenance a class of basic, brute laws. Even divine command theorists rely on at least one brute fact of their own, the fact that God fixes moral obligations.

Further, and more importantly, it is not even clear that divine command theory is compatible with a realist view of ethics after all. Divine command theory was supposed to secure the objectivity of moral demands by making morality independent of us. Yet for many moral realists, morality's obtaining independently of us is not enough for it to be objective. Objective moral requirements are supposed to be independent of any subject's moral attitudes, not just ours. As leading moral realist Russ Shafer-Landau puts it (2003), objective morality is stance-independent "in the sense that *the moral standards that fix the moral facts are not made true by virtue of their ratification from within any given actual or hypothetical perspective*" (p. 15, emphasis in original). On Shafer-Landau's view, objective moral standards are valid independently of anyone's perspective on them. This perspective could be one of an actual or hypothetical agent, human or divine. The moral requirement to help those in need would be objective just in case it does not have to be ratified, preferred, or willed by any agent to be valid. Divine command theory does not count as a form of realism on this approach since moral rules are wholly determined by God's will. There are no prior moral truths guiding God's verdicts. Anything would be moral so long as God said so. This is why, for many metaethicists, morality would be subjective, not objective, on a divine command theory (see Brink 2007).

Not all theists are divine command theorists. One could believe in God and also think that there are some moral truths that are not created by divine commands (see Audi 2007; Swinburne 1974). These moral truths would not be of God's own making, so they could qualify as objective. It might be an objective, necessary truth that cruelty is morally wrong or that God is morally good. Still, this form of theism would not enjoy the alleged advantages over atheism when it comes to making sense of moral realism. These theists would join atheists in accepting some brute, objective facts about morality, facts that do not depend on any agent's stance toward them.

In summary, moral realism does not present a special problem for atheism, and in some cases, actually favors atheism over theism. The problem for atheists was supposed to be that they do not have a very illuminating explanation for why certain basic moral principles would be objectively true. Even though divine command theorists can do more by telling us that these principles are true because God commanded them, there are real reasons to think that this theistic explanation undermines, rather than illustrates, morality's objectivity. Finally, if a theist allows that there are some objective, stance-independent moral truths, she – like the atheist – cannot appeal to God's will to explain where these truths come from. Both theists and atheists would find themselves in a similar position with respect to moral objectivity.

Normativity: Reasons to Act

Perhaps it is not so much the objectivity of moral demands that poses a problem for atheism, but morality's normativity. Moral rules tell us how we should act. They guide our action. Even if God is not needed for morality to be objective, God might be important for morality's normative dimension.

One way to understand what is normative about morality is in terms of reasons to act. Morality, on many views, is normative because we always have a good reason to do what morality commands. Good reasons are considerations that justify, or tell in favor of, performing an action. Suppose that I am morally required to keep my promise to help my friend throw a party. If honoring my word is the right thing for me to do, it seems that I have at least one good reason to do so. These reasons need not be decisive or overriding. Perhaps doing what morality asks of me would cause me considerable stress, and these self-serving considerations could provide competing reasons to break my promise. Here it is enough to say that we always have at least one good reason to be moral, even if it might ultimately be overridden by other reasons.

The view that morality always provides us with reasons to follow it is sometimes known as “moral rationalism” (Shafer-Landau 2003, Chapter 8). According to moral rationalism, necessarily, if it is morally required for me to perform action A, then I have a reason to do A. In other words, if I am morally required to help a needy bystander, I necessarily have at least one reason to do so. Moral rationalism captures the prescriptivity of morality. If I could be morally obligated to do something yet have no reason whatsoever to do it, morality would lose its claim to being action-guiding and normative.

Theism is in a good position to respect the truth of moral rationalism. If God exists, there will always be a reason to be moral. We ought to be moral in order to avoid punishment, reap the rewards of eternal salvation, please God, or have a fuller relationship with him. It is widely agreed that we always have a reason to do that which is in our interest or satisfies our desires, and God can make it such that being moral will always promote our interests and desires.

Atheists, in contrast, are hard-pressed to explain why we ought to be moral. Without God, it is difficult to see how morality will always line up with our interests or ends. It is easy to think of scenarios, both actual and possible, where acting morally would not satisfy any of an agent’s desires.

Rather than try to argue that morality always coincides with self-interest, atheists would do better to say that moral considerations are reason-giving in and of themselves. On this approach, morality doesn’t have to be linked to some other reason-giving consideration, such as self-interest, to be normative. The fact that something is the right thing to do would itself give us a reason to act. The view that moral reasons come from, and are intrinsic to, moral obligations is known as “intrinsic moral rationalism.” In contrast, extrinsic moral rationalists hold the normative force of morality hostage to something outside of morality, such as desire-satisfaction or self-interest.

The trouble with intrinsic moral rationalism is that its explanation of morality’s normativity is not that helpful. Intrinsic rationalists are doing little more than insisting that moral rules are normative without offering any account of why this is so.

The problems faced by atheists in capturing morality’s normativity has led some commentators to suppose that if there are any genuine moral obligations, they must come from God. Anscombe (1958) famously argued that moral laws require a divine law-giver. Without God, Anscombe simply cannot make sense of morality’s special normative force. If God does not exist, Anscombe thinks the very idea of a moral obligation will have lost its meaning, and that we have no other choice but to do away with the notion of the moral ought.

In response, atheists should disagree and claim that secular morality can accommodate normative, reason-giving moral obligations. Atheists can first point out that the theist's account of moral normativity faces problems of its own. One drawback with the theist's view is that it seems to locate the normative power of moral considerations in the wrong place. To say that we have a reason to be moral because acting morally allows us to avoid eternal damnation and reap the rewards of eternal bliss looks self-serving. These are not the reasons why we should follow moral demands. What is special about morality is that we ought to do what is right, not because it is in our interest, but because it is the right thing to do. Even if it turned out that we would not be rewarded for being moral, we still would have at least some reason to be moral. Intrinsic moral rationalism does a better job here since it puts the normative powers of morality within morality itself.

One barrier to accepting intrinsic moral rationalism is that it merely posits intrinsically normative moral entities without explaining why and how morality is normative. Intrinsic moral rationalists can defend themselves against this concern by noting that explanations of normativity have to come to an end somewhere. Intrinsic rationalists think that such explanations can end by citing a moral fact; the fact that something is morally required is enough to show that we have a reason to do it. Intrinsic moral rationalists will point out that even their competitors, extrinsic moral rationalists, accept a class of intrinsic reason-giving considerations, such as satisfying one's desire or being in one's self-interest. This means that there is not something objectionable *per se* about facts that are intrinsically reason-giving.

If it is the intrinsic form of moral rationalism that we are after, this would remove much of theism's advantage accounting for moral normativity. To secure intrinsic moral rationalism, the theist also cannot appeal to anything outside of morality – such as pleasing God or avoiding punishment – to explain why we ought to be moral. Both the theist and the atheist will be committed to the view that moral facts are special insofar as they are reason-giving in and of themselves. Even if the content of moral rules is fixed by divine commands, on intrinsic rationalism, morality's normative powers could not depend on coinciding with our interests. Moral rules, wherever they come from, would supply us with reasons to follow them in and of themselves. Just as theists will claim that God's commands have, by their very nature, this special normative force, atheists will say something similar: moral rules are unique because they are intrinsically and necessarily reason-giving.

Theists might complain that the above defense of secular moral normativity rests on an incomplete picture of morality's reason-giving powers. Whereas moral rationalism says that we always have at least one good reason to be moral, it could be argued that morality always gives us overriding reasons to act. If moral reasons necessarily trump all other reasons, then theism might be in a better position to explain this stricter view of morality's normative force, since it would always be best to follow God's commands (see Evans 2013).

There are several ways to respond to this criticism. First, if the overriding normative powers of moral obligations are intrinsic to them, the theist still cannot invoke the prospect of punishment or reward to explain why morality always gives us the best reason to act. Both theists and atheists can say that morality is such that it intrinsically and necessarily gives us an overriding reason to follow its demands. Second, if the idea is that morality extrinsically provides us with the best reasons to act, atheists can once more reject this extrinsic understanding of moral normativity on the grounds that

morality should supply its own reasons for action. Third, this stronger view of morality's normativity can be difficult to defend, especially in the face of cases in which it would seem rational, all things considered, to ignore morality, such as where doing your moral duty would bring intense personal suffering, extreme sacrifice, or alienation from everything you love. Even if theism can explain why moral considerations would outweigh all else, this is not a view of morality that we must accept.

Normativity: Motivation to Act

There is another way to object to atheism on normative grounds, and this is to say that atheism has trouble explaining the motivational power of moral thought. The normative force of morality is sometimes understood, not in terms of reasons to act, but in terms of motives to do what one thinks is moral. Moral judgments are motivational in way that other judgments are not. If I sincerely think that lying is wrong, it seems I should have at least some motive not to lie. The same is not true of other beliefs, such as my belief that atoms contain electrons or that my neighbor is growing kale in her vegetable garden. Moral motivation need not be overriding. A stronger motive to lie may well defeat my moral motive to tell the truth. That said, if I didn't have any motivation to act on my moral judgment, it is natural to conclude that I didn't really think that lying was wrong after all. To judge certain actions as immoral just is, in a certain respect, to be moved to avoid, criticize, or prevent those acts.

Motivational judgment internalism is the view that, necessarily, if I judge that action A is morally required, I have some motivation to act in accord with this judgment (Shafer-Landau 2003, p. 143). The difference between motivational judgment internalism and moral rationalism is that the former concerns motives to act whereas the latter concerns good reasons to act. Motives and reasons can come apart. One could be motivated to do something one arguably has no reason to do, such as spending one's day counting blades of grass or harming children for fun. In addition, it is possible to have a reason to do something without also being motivated to do it. We could be morally indifferent, ignorant, or weak-willed.

If God fixes things so that it is always in our self-interest to be moral, then it is easier to see why moral judgments are so motivational. We are motivated to be moral to avoid punishment or to have a closer relationship with God and so on. Even if it is not the case that the *reason* we should be moral is that it is in our interest to do so, we could still be *motivated* to act in ways that we think are in our interests. If I believe that doing the moral thing would be rewarded in the afterlife, the prospect of this reward could be what moves me to do the right thing, despite the fact that being rewarded is not the reason why I ought to comply with morality.

An obvious weakness with the above theistic picture is that it only works for those who believe in God and care about the believed consequences of acting morally. If you do not think that immoral actions are punished in the afterlife, this will not explain why your moral judgments motivate you to act.

Theists could say that God instilled in us a natural inclination to be moral. Motivational judgment internalism would be true because we share a common psychological makeup to act on our moral judgments, and this makeup is due to God.

While this account of moral motivation is not open to atheists, they might offer a similar explanation without invoking God. Perhaps we share certain deep-seated desires or motivational states, such as sympathy or fellow-feeling, and the presence of these states explains why moral judgments are so action-guiding (Brink 1989, p. 49). Rather than cite God as the reason for these shared motivational tendencies, one could give a naturalistic, evolutionary explanation (see Street 2006). If it could be shown that the motivational states ultimately implicated in moral motivation were genetically heritable and fitness-enhancing for our ancestors, God would not be needed to account for the nature of moral motivation.

Given that many people are motivated to be moral irrespective of religious considerations, a secular account of moral motivation looks promising. The meta-ethical weaknesses with atheism, if there are any, should not come from an inability to explain why we care about morality.

Moral Knowledge

Another meta-ethical problem for atheism concerns our knowledge of moral rules. Moral knowledge should at least be possible. Moral rules are rules for us. Morality's prescriptions guide our conduct. When we fail to do what morality asks of us, we can be subject to criticism, punishment, and rebuke. If these requirements were completely inaccessible to us, it is hard to see how we could be criticized for failing to do our moral duty. If we had no way of knowing what the moral rules were, there is little sense in which moral rules direct our action. For these reasons, it is widely supposed that moral requirements – if there are any – are in principle knowable for us. If a theory makes moral knowledge inexplicable or impossible to achieve, this would be a count against that view.

Moral knowledge does not look so difficult to come by if God exists. We could look to God and his commands to know what is right. Even if divine command theory were false and God commands us to do actions because they are right (rather than actions being right because he commands them), God would be an excellent source of moral guidance. Additionally, God could endow us with an innate capacity to tell right from wrong, making moral knowledge within all of our reach.

On the atheistic worldview, it is more challenging to explain how we could ever know moral truths. Upon realizing that a course of action caused a great deal of pain, how do we then determine if it was the right thing to do? J. L. Mackie (1977, p. 38) famously summarized the problems with moral knowledge as follows: "If there were objective values, then they would be entities or qualities or relations of a very strange sort, utterly different from anything else in the universe. Correspondingly, if we were aware of them, it would have to be by some special faculty of moral perception or intuition, utterly differently from our ordinary ways of knowing everything else." Because moral qualities are unique, Mackie supposed that we would need a similarly strange faculty of moral intuition to detect their instances. This is problematic, since it is clear that we do not in fact possess such a moral sense organ.

One way around the atheist's epistemological problems might be to deny that morality is objective. If morality were not so independent of us, this could remove the

strangeness that Mackie attributes to it, and by extension, the mystery surrounding moral knowledge. Suppose that moral standards are determined by a society's majority opinion, or by the verdicts of an ideal advisor, or by what would follow from an agent's point of view upon rational reflection. In all three cases, morality would not be objective since moral demands are determined by some agent's attitudes. These subjective approaches to ethics would ameliorate Mackie's concerns about morality. We do not need some mysterious faculty of moral perception to know what is required of us. Rather, we simply consult the prevailing view of our society, figure out what the ideal advisor would recommend, or determine what would follow from our points of view upon reflection.

Still, it is not obvious that moving to a subjective view of ethics removes all of the worries about moral knowledge. To know what we are morally required to do, we would first have to figure out which form of moral subjectivism was correct. Before I spend my time trying to decipher the majority-held moral opinions of my society, I should have some reason to think that these opinions fix my moral obligations. This latter kind of general moral knowledge would itself need to be explained, and it may be just as hard to come by as knowledge of the realist's objective moral truths.

Even if moral subjectivism protected the possibility of moral knowledge, denying moral objectivity would be a significant concession to theists. Objectivity in ethics is something that many meta-ethicists want to respect. If the only way atheists can explain the possibility of moral knowledge is to make morality subjective, this is not much of a victory for atheists.

Many atheists therefore want to show that moral truths are both knowable and objective. One way of doing this is to highlight the similarities between objective moral knowledge and apparently unproblematic knowledge in other areas of thought. According to one form of moral realism, Cornell moral realism, moral facts are perfectly natural facts; the wrongness of Sally's lie is entirely constituted by entities, relations, and properties studied by the natural sciences such as biology and psychology (Brink 1989). Further, we can know about moral facts in much the same way as we do the facts of the natural sciences, through theory-dependent observation, empirical theorizing, and inferences to the best explanation of our experiences (see Brink 1989; Sturgeon 1984). Cornell realists maintain that, in both ethics and science, inquiry proceeds against a backdrop of prior theoretical assumptions. In light of certain scientific assumptions about genetics, biologists can uncover truths about local adaptation. Similarly, under the supposition that we are morally required to promote happiness, we can determine whether overriding a patient's informed consent would be morally wrong. The theoretical assumptions in ethics as well as in science are also ultimately justified by observational evidence, theory-dependent testing, and explanatory power. If moral knowledge is similar to scientific knowledge of atoms, biochemical reactions, and evolution, this would remove the mystery that is supposed to surround moral knowledge in a world without God.

Another option is to compare moral knowledge to non-empirical and theory-independent knowledge in disciplines such as logic, mathematics, and philosophy. According to moral intuitionism, we can know some moral truths directly, without inferring them from premises. Intuitionists such as W. D. Ross (2002) and Robert Audi (2004) think that some moral truths are self-evident, and we can know them through

exercising our rational capacities. For Ross and Audi, we can know that keeping promises is *prima facie* morally right solely on the basis of grasping adequately the proposition: *keeping promises is prima facie morally right*. No further proof or observational evidence is necessary to know that this proposition is true. Against Mackie, intuitionists insist that their view does not require a special, dedicated faculty of moral intuition. Nothing over and above rational reflection, of the sort employed in other areas of thought, is needed for moral knowledge.

These secular accounts of moral knowledge are not without their challenges. Intuitionists such as Ross and Audi have to defend the idea that some moral truths are self-evident and show that these truths are substantive enough to explain our moral knowledge. Cornell realists face doubts that moral truths are knowable in the same theory-dependent and empirical way as are the truths of the natural sciences. Both moral epistemologies confront the objection that our moral belief-forming processes are not very reliable. Critics have alleged that many of our moral beliefs are caused by factors such as personal bias, emotion, or evolutionary forces, factors that have nothing to do with moral truth (Sinnott-Armstrong 2006). This casts doubt on the idea that our moral beliefs rise to the level of genuine moral knowledge.

Of all of the meta-ethical arguments against atheism, the argument from moral knowledge is perhaps the strongest. Theists have more resources at their disposal to explain how and why moral facts would be accessible to us. Even if many of our moral beliefs are subject to distorting forces, God can provide a corrective for these errors. Divine guidance, if we were to accept it, would be unimpeachable. God could also give us the abilities needed reach moral insight and overcome our biases. These options are not available to atheists. If you want to be an atheist and a moral realist while also preserving the possibility of moral knowledge, you are going to have to explain how our moral beliefs correspond to the objective moral truth in a way that qualifies these beliefs as knowledge.

Taking Stock: Atheism and Moral Error Theory

It is sometimes claimed that if God does not exist, neither does morality. One way of putting this is to say that atheism implies an error theory about moral discourse. Moral error theorists think that first-order moral claims are systematically false. For moral error theorists, when we ascribe moral properties to things, we never manage to say anything true since there are not any instances of right or wrong, good or bad. People are drawn to error theory because they cannot reconcile the existence of moral facts with the world as we know it. J. L. Mackie was a classic moral error theorist, and for him, the trouble with morality is that it would be unlike anything else in the universe. Mackie agrees that morality, if it existed, would be objective, reason-giving, motivational, and knowable. Unfortunately, Mackie cannot see how such moral facts could fit into a naturalistic world. He suggests that if there were a God, this might remove the strangeness of morality, but Mackie does not find theism plausible (Mackie 1977, pp. 48, 231). Faced with the choice between allowing a class of mysterious entities into our ontology and admitting that such entities do not exist, Mackie argues for the latter.

In the previous sections, we considered many strategies atheists can employ to block the conclusion that their view leads to error theory. Many atheists will insist that there is nothing objectionably strange about a morality without God. They can invoke companions-in-guilt style arguments, noting that other areas of thought accept brute objectivity, intrinsic normativity, or non-empirical knowability without difficulty. They can draw positive comparisons to facts of natural science or of logic and philosophy to ease concerns about the metaphysical status of secular moral facts and the ways in which we can know about them.

Atheists could also reject many of the meta-ethical assumptions responsible for the worry that their view implies error theory. All of the meta-ethical positions considered thus far – moral realism, moral rationalism, motivational judgment internalism, and the knowability of morality – are contentious. For example, subjectivists, relativists, and constructivists think that there are genuine moral facts, only they are not objective. Lying, cheating, and stealing are wrong because we think they are, or because we would judge these actions to be wrong were we perfectly rational. On these accounts, morality depends constitutively on human thoughts or feelings in certain ways. If any of these subjective accounts of ethics are correct, God would not be needed to explain how there could be any moral requirements. Moral rules would be put in place by our society's verdicts or by what we would think upon full reflection.

Other meta-ethicists deny that there are real moral requirements, but they do so in a way that does not lead to error theory. Non-cognitivism is the view that the function of moral discourse is not to describe the way the world is morally, but to express states of mind such as emotion, desire, preference, or disapproval. These latter mental states are non-cognitive since their aim is not to represent the world, as do cognitive states like belief and knowledge. For non-cognitivists, my utterance "Lying is wrong" does not convey my belief that lying has the property of moral wrongness. Instead, it expresses my negative feelings about lying or my disapproval of lies. Since expressions of non-cognitive attitudes are neither true nor false, moral statements are not truth-apt. Non-cognitivism is not a form of error theory since it does not hold that moral statements are systematically false. One of the attractions of non-cognitivism is that it does not require a realm of metaphysically dubious moral facts and properties; only the natural world and our non-cognitive responses to it are needed.

If we adopt a version of moral non-cognitivism, many of the concerns about atheistic morality no longer apply. Atheists who are also non-cognitivists are not under the burden to explain how there could be moral obligations or how they could be reason-giving, since there are no such obligations, strictly speaking. Worries about moral knowledge also disappear because the aim of moral thought is not to reach true, justified moral beliefs, but to evince one's preferences or desires about the way the world should be. The motivational force of moral judgments would also be readily explained since to judge that something is wrong just is to dislike or disapprove of something, and states of disapproval and dislike are motivational.

The two anti-realist approaches to ethics just discussed – non-cognitivism and popular forms of subjectivism – not only protect atheists from various meta-ethical objections, they also raise significant problems for theists. Classical theists believe

that God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-good. This position is difficult to square with non-cognitivism. If non-cognitivism were correct, when we claim that God is morally perfect or that we have a moral obligation to help those in need, we are not saying anything true, morally, about the world. We are instead just expressing our approval of, or preference for, the objects of these moral opinions. We do not approve of God because he is good or dislike those who fail to help the needy because they acted wrongly, as this would commit us to objectionable moral facts. Divine commands would also lack cognitive moral content. It is hard to see why a theist would want to deny the moral-fact-stating function of moral thought. The main motivation for being a non-cognitivist is a reluctance to admit real moral properties and their instances into one's ontology, but a classical theist would not share these kinds of ontological misgivings. Non-cognitivism and classical theism, while perhaps not logically incompatible, do not form a comfortable pair.

Theism has an even harder time accommodating many subjectivist views. If there are moral truths, classical theists would not allow that they depend on human judgment or preference. To say that that God's goodness, or the moral worth of persons, is a function of our thoughts or feeling would be at odds with the theistic idea that these moral truths obtain irrespective of human attitude.

In addition to rejecting moral realism and moral cognitivism, atheists can also take issue with other features that morality is assumed to have. It is not obvious that moral obligations must be necessarily reason-giving. Some meta-ethicists allow that we might not have any reason to be moral, especially if doing so satisfies none of our ends or desires (Foot 1972). Similarly, it seems possible for someone to judge sincerely that an action is morally required and lack any motivation to perform or promote this action. Finally, atheists could argue that nothing about morality entails that humans must have access to it. If we are unable to discover what we ought morally to do, this would be a count against us, not morality. Once more, some of these positions are not friendly to theism. Theism may not sit well with the idea that we could fail to have any reason to be moral or that we are unable to find out what these requirements are. Adopting an alternative meta-ethical perspective not only makes some objections to atheism irrelevant, it offers us positive meta-ethical reasons to prefer atheism over theism.

On the replies just developed, atheists avoid error theory, but only by claiming that morality lacks one or more of the features we thought were essential to it. This strategy admittedly leaves atheists open to the criticism that what they have given us is not really morality after all, but a second-rate substitute. It could be argued that rules that are subjective, non-normative, or inaccessible do not count as *moral* rules. If atheists wish to avoid this sort of deadlock, they need to return to the task of showing, not that the theist's conception of morality is mistaken, but that atheism can account for it just as well, if not better, than the theist. A further option would be to grant that morality is objective, reason-giving, and so on, but simply accept an error theory about morality. We might be mistaken in thinking that anything is morally right or wrong, good or bad. While an error theoretic account of morality is assumed to be the position of last resort, it has seen some recent defenders, and it may not be as implausible as initially supposed (see Olson 2014).

Conclusion

Secular morality can accommodate a wide range of meta-ethical perspectives. Atheism is more tolerant, meta-ethically speaking, than theism. Atheists can be error theorists, non-cognitivists, subjectivists, moral realists, moral rationalists, or moral anti-rationalists. Theism lacks this sort of meta-ethical freedom. Theists admittedly can explain some meta-ethical positions better than atheists, especially, for example, extrinsic moral rationalism and the possibility of moral knowledge. Still, in most other cases, theism does not offer many meta-ethical benefits, and sometimes finds itself at a disadvantage. Theism is not needed to explain how there could be brute, necessary objective moral truths. Theism combined with divine command theory actually prevents us from securing moral objectivity. Theism is also not needed to capture the intrinsic normative force of moral considerations. With or without God, intrinsic rationalists will maintain that the reason to be moral comes from moral requirements themselves. Finally, it should be noted that even if theism enjoys a meta-ethical edge over atheism, this would not be enough to tip the scales in theism's favor. This is because theism involves the further and controversial ontological commitment to the existence of a divine being. For those unable to shoulder this added metaphysical burden, there are few, if any, meta-ethical costs to doing so.

References

- Anscombe, G. (1958) "Modern moral philosophy." *Philosophy* 33: 1–19.
- Audi, R. (2004) *The Good in the Right: A Theory of Intuition and Intrinsic Value*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Audi, R. (2007) "Divine command morality and the autonomy of ethics." *Faith and Philosophy* 24: 121–143.
- Brink, D. (1989) *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brink, D. (2007) "The autonomy of ethics," in M. Martin (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 149–165.
- Evans, S. (2013) *God and Moral Obligation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Foot, P. (1972) "Morality as a system of hypothetical imperatives." *Philosophical Review* 81: 305–316.
- Mackie, J. (1977) *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. New York: Penguin.
- Olson, J. (2014) *Moral Error Theory: History, Critique, Defence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ross, W. (2002) *The Right and the Good*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Shafer-Landau, R. (2003) *Moral Realism: A Defence*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Sinnott-Armstrong, W. (2006) 'Moral intuitionism meets empirical psychology' in T. Horgan and M. Timmons (eds.) *Metaethics After Moore*. Oxford: Clarendon, pp. 339–365.
- Street, S. (2006) "A Darwinian dilemma for realist theories of value." *Philosophical Studies* 127: 109–166.
- Sturgeon, N. (1984) "Moral explanations," in D. Copp and D. Zimmerman (eds.) *Morality, Reason, and Truth Totowa*: Rowman & Allanheld, pp. 49–78.
- Swinburne, R. (1974) "Duty and the will of God." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 4: 213–227.

Further Reading

- Van Roojen, M. (2015) *Metaethics: A Contemporary Introduction*. New York: Routledge.
- Wielenberg, E. (2014) *Robust Ethics: The Metaphysics and Epistemology of Godless Normative Realism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Meaning

THADDEUS METZ

This chapter critically discusses philosophical literature bearing on atheism and life's meaning, with a major focus on what has been published in English in the twenty-first century. Its aim is to acquaint the reader with the major debates, to indicate some points where they call for contributions, and to do so in ways that minimize overlap with related accounts of late (such as Blessing 2013; Mawson 2013).

Four Views on God and Meaning

The focus of the chapter is on the question of what the implications of atheism – roughly the nonexistence of God as conceived in the monotheist tradition – might be for whether and how our lives are meaningful. There is some discussion of the opposite relation, of what the implications of meaning in our lives, or belief in it, might be for whether God exists or not (e.g., Dougherty 2016; Megill and Linford 2016, pp. 45–46), but it is small and underdeveloped. Most contemporary Anglo-American-Australasian philosophers have instead been interested in what a world without God would mean for our ability to have a significant existence.

With respect to this question, there are four major answers in the literature, namely, that God is necessary for meaning in our lives, God is not necessary for it, God would enhance the meaning in our lives, and God would detract from it. These views have been largely advanced in chronological order through the history of Western philosophy, with the view that life would be meaningless without God of course having been particularly prominent in the medieval period, the rejection of this claim having arisen in the modern era, and then sophisticated positions about enhancement or reduction having appeared in earnest only in the past thirty years. This chapter addresses each of these views and in this order, after first defining terms such as “meaningfulness” and “God” and drawing crucial distinctions between, say, a spiritual account of what exists (theism) and a spiritual account of what would make life meaningful (supernaturalism).

Note that the chapter does not consider the potential relevance of an afterlife, such as an eternal existence in heaven, for meaning. Although there are those who maintain that, necessarily, if God exists then we all have souls that could enjoy heaven forever, this claim is contested. Many in the Christian process theology and in the Jewish traditions disagree – for just two examples – contending that God created us from dust, to which we are destined to return. Moreover, if heaven is not essentially defined by the presence of God, and instead as a state in which one’s self maximally flourishes after the death of one’s present body, then a world without God could be a world with a heaven, a familiar worldview in various Asian traditions. In any event, as most in the field take arguments about the existence of a perfect spiritual person and about our having an immortal, spiritual essence to have several distinct logics with respect to meaning in life, this chapter follows them by discussing solely the former.

Clarifying the Debates

Above God was alluded to as a perfect spiritual person. Even though many think this phrasing could be reduced to simply a “perfect person” since the spiritual is much higher than the material, the spiritual dimension is the key one to emphasize in this chapter. Atheism is the view that there is conclusive evidence (or at least is the belief) that there does not exist a spiritual agent who has perfections such as being all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-good and who is the ground of the physical world. For an entity to be spiritual is not merely for it not to be physical, since, conceptually at least, it appears that certain abstract things could be neither spiritual nor physical, perhaps numbers. In the monotheistic tradition, on which this chapter focuses, the spiritual realm includes a substance, a bearer of properties, that is not in (our) space and time and is not composed of subatomic particles. Such concrete entities could include God, angels, and souls. Although most self-described “atheists” reject the existence of any spiritual realm, this chapter focuses on the rejection of God. An atheist characteristically believes that the evidence favors disbelief in God, while the theist maintains that it favors belief in him, and the agnostic is not sure either way.

If God does not exist, then one sort of meaning also does not exist, namely, an ultimate, personal source of the human race as a whole. Sometimes philosophers distinguish between the meaning *of* life, by which they mean the point of humanity in general, from the meaning *in* life, roughly, a final value that a given one of us might exhibit but that another might not, at least not to the same degree. If God does not exist, then (setting aside lesser alien beings who might have created us) there is nothing meaningful about the human race, in the sense it was not created for a reason, let alone a good one, and instead arose unintentionally.

There are those in the field who take the question of the meaning *of* life to be primary in some way (e.g., Seachris 2009; Tartaglia 2015). However, a large majority of work by English-speaking philosophers in the postwar era has been focused on meaning *in* life, the thought being that regardless of whether there is a purpose for humanity in general, particular lives could exhibit some meaning to varying degrees, depending principally on the different ways people think and act. Debates have focused on whether

God is also central to this, individualist sort of meaning, which might be constituted by the varying extent to which people have fulfilled a purpose God assigned to them.

For most in the field, the meaning in an individual's life is something good for its own sake that, while probably a partial function of happiness and morality, is reducible to neither of these values. Intuitively, a person could enjoy meaningless happiness such as eating chocolate ice cream, or could suffer miserable meaning such as making large sacrifices for others. In addition, while for most morality can be an important source of meaning, it seems that meaning can also come from non-moral considerations such as knowledge or art and even in the wake of immorality, say, where one trades off impartial justice for the sake of a beloved's well-being.

If talk of "meaningfulness" and cognate terms such as "significance," "importance," and the like is not the same as "happiness" and "rightness," then what is it about? In the field a number of ideas have been suggested (canvassed in Metz 2013a, pp. 17–36). According to some, to ask about the meaningfulness of a person's life is to ask whether it serves some particularly choice-worthy purpose beyond obtaining pleasure for herself. For others, talk of "meaning" by definition connotes ideas of a positive relationship between the individual and something else that is good for its own sake such as another person, an artwork, or a theory. For still others, when thinking about meaning in a life, one is considering what about it might warrant certain emotional reactions such as great esteem or admiration. And finally there is the idea that meaningfulness is a function of narrative, say, a matter of composing one's life story.

It would be philosophically interesting to determine whether just one of these ideas, or some other one, best captures meaning-talk. However, it is unnecessary for the purposes of this chapter, which can be achieved simply by appeal to this cluster of related ideas. Its question is: Which, if any, higher-order purposes beyond one's subjective well-being are there if God does not exist, or, what, if anything, can be particularly admirable about one's life in the absence of relating to a perfect spiritual person who grounds the universe?

A supernaturalist answers that, without God (or at least something spiritual), there can be no meaning in life, or at a minimum no ultimate or deep meaning. A naturalist rejects that claim and instead answers that there could be substantial meaning in life absent God (and perhaps even in a purely physical world).

Notice that these are views about the conditions for what would make life meaningful, and they do not imply anything about whether they in fact obtain. Although many supernaturalists are theists, there are those who are not. For example, Leo Tolstoy is well known for having both contended that life would be meaningless without God (and without an eternal afterlife) and denied that there is evidence of God's existence (though he did come to accept it on faith). Similarly, Albert Camus famously believed that life would be absurd (perhaps a bit different from meaningless) in the absence of God who would impart a rational and just order and yet could not bring himself to believe in such. The combination of supernaturalism about the nature of meaning and atheism about the nature of reality is conceptually consistent.

Likewise, the combination of naturalism about meaning and theism about reality is not contradictory. One could hold that God exists and has created humanity as a whole for a purpose but that he adds little or nothing to the meaning in our lives as individuals – or even that he detracts from such meaning.

Although these latter positions are logically possible, they might be probabilistically implausible. There is only a sparse literature addressing the competing likelihoods of the four combinations of views about meaning and metaphysics, viz., supernaturalism-theism, supernaturalism-atheism, naturalism-theism, naturalism-atheism. Philosophers most often cluster around the first and fourth positions, but there is as yet little systematic discussion about whether they should.

The rest of this chapter traces the dialectic between various forms of supernaturalism and naturalism, setting aside the metaphysical question of whether God exists or not. It considers first the view that God is necessary for meaning, then the view that he is not, next the view that God could greatly enhance meaning in a life, and finally the view that God would in fact detract from meaning in a life in certain ways, if not on balance.

Various combinations of these views are possible. Obviously one could hold that God would not be necessary for life's meaning but that he would enhance it. Or one might hold that God is not necessary for meaning in life, and further that he would neither enhance nor detract from it. Or one may hold that God would both enhance and detract from meaning in certain respects. As considerations about God's contributory role toward meaning have gained prominence only recently, the field has yet to consider in depth whether various combinations of views are more stable or promising than others.

God as Necessary for Meaning

For a long while in Western philosophy, the dominant view was the God is the source not merely of everything that we can describe, but also of everything that we can prescribe – that both nature and norms spring from him. If God's goodness grounds everything about how we should live, then it is not just happiness and rightness that are a function of him, but meaningfulness, too. Despite this broad common ground about meaning in life, there has been substantial disagreement about precisely why God might be necessary to confer meaning on our lives as individuals.

The most common approach has been to appeal to God's purpose and to hold that the more one elects to fulfill it, the more meaningful one's life. By this view, if there is no God then no one's life is meaningful, and, if there is a God who has assigned us a purpose but some of us have utterly failed to realize it, then those lives are meaningless. If one probes and asks why God's *purpose* would be necessary for meaning in our lives, several different answers are offered. Some say that having been created for a reason is the only way to avoid an accidental or contingent existence (Craig 2013, pp. 158–161)). Others contend that God's purpose is alone what could ground a non-relativist moral system that confers meaning when we live up to it (Cottingham 2005, pp. 37–57; Craig 2013, pp. 161–162, 165–167). Still others suggest that “without us God would not be God” and that by realizing our purpose we ultimately would do “our part to make God God,” that is, to help realize God's infinite plenitude (Smith 2000).

When it comes to what the content of God's purpose would be, religious thinkers traditionally appeal to the purposes named in their favored holy texts such as the bible or the Qur'an. Purposes such as loving one's neighbor or serving God are universal in

the sense of applying to everyone. Some philosophers have argued, however, that God would have a unique and ideally suited purpose for each one of us, perhaps because meaning is a function of a person's identity, which, in turn, is constituted by how she ought in particular to live (Affolter 2007), or because it would be unfair of God to give everyone the same purpose since they would have unequal abilities to achieve it (Salles 2010).¹

In order to ensure that the content of the God's purpose would have the intuitively correct content, and would not be for any of us, say, to serve as food for intergalactic travelers, supernaturalists usually maintain that God's nature as loving or otherwise maximally desirable would be what informs his will in respect of us. "Since God is perfectly good, his purposes for human life will assuredly have positive value" (Quinn 2000, p. 59).

Some other, non-purposive accounts of why God might necessary for our lives to have meaning in them deny that a meaning-conferring God would even have a purpose as normally construed (explored in Metz 2013a, pp. 106–122). However, much more common is the view that such a God would be purposive but that it would not be this feature that centrally explains his sole ability to make our lives meaningful. For example, some maintain that God alone could impart significance to our existence insofar as he is the only one who could eternally remember and appreciate who we were (Hartshorne 1984).

God as Not Necessary for Meaning

There have been four salient ways that naturalists have sought to deny the claim that God is necessary for our lives to be at all meaningful (for some unusual arguments that have recently appeared, see Megill and Linford 2016, pp. 36–41). One has been to contend that nature could perform the task for which God is purportedly essential. In principle, a life in a purely physical world could be one that, say, avoids contingency, lives up to invariant moral norms, or is remembered by others (e.g., Wielenberg 2005, pp. 38–67; Metz 2013a, pp. 87–97, 108–10, 169–173). Even if lives in the actual physical world do not do all of these things, it suffices for rejection of the claim that God is necessary for meaning in lives that there are lives in merely possible physical worlds that do. Sorting out this debate of course requires addressing a variety of complex metaphysical and meta-ethical issues.

A second strategy by which to question any God-based theory is to contend that many of those inclined to hold it would evince an incoherence in doing so, as it would be in tension with claims they already hold, or at least plausibly should hold (Metz 2013a, pp. 87–97). Specifically, if a God-based theorist claims to know that meaning exists, as most do, and then if she also claims not to know that God exists (even if she has faith in God), as many do and should, then she would be contradicting herself to claim to know that if meaning exists, then God exists (a principle implied by a God-based theory). Although we plausibly have evidence sufficient for belief that some lives are meaningful, we probably do not have such for belief that God exists, making it incoherent to believe that God's existence is necessary for a meaningful life. Critics have

made a variety of replies to this rationale, most often contending that there has in fact been knowledge of God, or that there is *now* such knowledge given that there is meaning and that meaning implies God's existence (e.g., Waghorn 2015, pp. 159–160; Cottingham 2016a, p. 52; Wielenberg 2016, 29).

A third way that naturalists have sought to provide reasons to reject any God-based theory of meaning in life is to suggest that it is ultimately unintelligible. They make not the familiar claim that God is hard to understand, but rather that the sort of God that could in principle alone make our lives meaningful could not avoid being so (Metz 2013b, p. 21; cf. Metz 2013a, pp. 112–118). On the one hand, in order for God to be the sole source of meaning, God must be utterly unlike us. The more God were like us, the more reason there would be to think we could obtain meaning from ourselves, absent God. On the other hand, the more God is utterly unlike us and is radically other, perhaps by being atemporal or simple, the less clear it is how we could obtain meaning by relating to him. In reply, some have been happy to bite the bullet by, for example, welcoming the idea that only the ineffable could ground meaning in our lives (Bennett-Hunter 2014; 2016).

A fourth major strategy by which to question the claim that God is necessary for meaning is to argue that meaning intuitively seems possible despite atheism. If we think of the stereotypical lives of Albert Einstein, Mother Teresa, and Pablo Picasso, they seem meaningful in virtue of the activities they performed, even if we suppose there is no all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-good spiritual person who is the ground of the physical world (Wielenberg 2005, pp. 31–37, 49–50; 2016, pp. 31, 33–34)). This case-based rationale has been accepted as true “beyond a reasonable doubt” even by many of those who are religiously inclined (e.g., Quinn 2000, p. 58). Those who believe that all objective value must come from God might have contrary intuitions, or will at least seek to provide theoretical reasons to doubt such cases. However, another way to respond, which is on the upswing these days, is to grant that some meaning would be possible without God, but to maintain that only he could provide a greater degree or better kind of it, as discussed below in the following section.

Before addressing the claim that God would enhance meaning, even if not be necessary for it, consider what meaningfulness might consist of in an atheistic world. Although some supernaturalists believe that only a crude subjectivism, focused on an individual's being pleased or getting what she wants, would be possible in a world without God (e.g., Cottingham 2005, p. 53 and Craig, 2013, pp. 161, 167), that is not in fact the dominant view among naturalists. Although such a subjectivism is of course held by some (e.g., Frankfurt 1982; cf. Mawson 2016), much more popular in the twenty-first century is some kind of objectivism, according to which there are certain ways of being and doing that one has reasons of meaning to be pleased by or to want, if one currently does not.

Most commonly held is the sort of view captured by Susan Wolf's (2010) pithy slogan: “Meaning arises when subjective attraction meets objective attractiveness.” This theory implies that no meaning accrues to one's life if one believes in, is satisfied by, or cares about a project that is not worthwhile, or if one takes up a worthwhile project but fails to judge it important, be satisfied by it, care about it, or otherwise identify with it. Different versions of this theory will have different accounts of the appropriate mental states and of worthwhileness.

Although Wolf eschews the search for a common denominator to all the worthwhile projects, many others have engaged in that (worthwhile?) project, with some suggesting – to give just a few examples – that they all involve: being creative (Taylor 1987); promoting rational nature theoretically and practically in exceptional ways (Smith 1997, pp. 179–221); and realizing goals that are transcendent for being long-lasting in duration and broad in scope (Mintoff 2008). Others contend that the search for unity among objectively attractive activities is fruitless, and that an irreducible pluralism is true of meaning in a world without God (Kekes 2000).

God as Enhancing of Meaning

There are two main ways that supernaturalists have sought to argue that, even if God is not necessary for meaning, as the cases of Einstein, Mother Teresa, and Picasso suggest, meaning would be greatly enhanced in some way were God to exist and one were to relate to him. On the one hand, some appear to contend that a life with God could have much more meaning, a quantitative difference, while others contend it could have a deeper or higher kind of meaning, a qualitative one.

The key instance of the latter view is inspired largely by Robert Nozick's influential discussion of God's bearing on what makes a life meaningful, now more than 35 years old (Nozick 1981, pp. 594–618). In it, Nozick draws a distinction between meaning that is limited or partial, on the one hand, and meaning that is unlimited or ultimate, on the other. The former sort of meaning in life is relational, a matter of connecting with something else that is meaningful. But for this latter, meaning-conferring condition to itself be meaningful, it too must be related to something else that is meaningful, and so on "all the way down," in Nozick's elegant phrasing (p. 599), until one reaches something that cannot relate to anything beyond itself because it is all-encompassing and so constitutes an intrinsic kind of meaning. For Nozick, that is God.

Neither Nozick nor other supernaturalists inspired by his approach to meaning (e.g., Bennett-Hunter 2014) are to be read as contending that human lives can exhibit the intrinsic meaning that only an unlimited being or something ineffable could do. However, they do appear to contend that the relational meaning in our lives would be qualitatively enhanced were we to connect in the right way with that which is meaningful in itself and the ultimate source of all other meaning. "Limited transcendence, the transcending of our limits so as to connect with a wider context of value which itself is limited, does give our lives meaning – but a limited one. We may thirst for more" (Nozick 1981, p. 618). The field continues to consider issues such as whether and in what respect human meaning is relational and must form a regress that originates in something unlimited, how to relate to such a condition so as to obtain meaning, and why one might think that so relating would confer a higher type of meaning on our lives (e.g., Bennett-Hunter 2016).

The other strategy by which to argue that God could greatly enhance the meaning in our lives relative to what would be possible in an atheist world is more quantitative; it does not draw a distinction between types of meaning, at least not explicitly. For example, some maintain that participation in God's plan, say, by acting morally, would give our lives "a cosmic significance ... instead of a significance very limited in time

and space ... (in that) the whole universe and all its inhabitants including ourselves were created and are sustained by God who loves each one of us" (Swinburne 2016, p. 154, and see also pp. 156–158; Quinn 2000). In addition to our actions having a much greater importance by virtue of their role in a large-scale, benevolent project, they might by virtue of God consequently appreciating that contribution.

The sense that our acts are eternally subject to divine evaluation, so far from detracting from their meaning, seems deeply to enhance their significance ... (as) a source of joy to a being of supreme wisdom and love. This amplifies and as it were confirms the meaningfulness that they already had on earth, and protects them against the erosions of time and contingency, shielding them against the backdrop of impermanence against which nothing in the long term matters very much (Cottingham 2016b, p. 135; see also Swinburne 2016b, p. 154).

These arguments appear to turn on considerations of scope, something about all space or all time (see Kahane 2014). They suggest that a life could be much more meaningful only if the *world* in which we live were not merely a "blank space-time complex" and if instead "reality [were] ultimately personal" (Cottingham 2016b, p. 131; cf. Wielenberg 2005, pp. 116–127) –indeed, a function of an agent with the highest degree of compossible perfections who will overcome evil.

Although one can find traces of these rationales in earlier works, sophisticated and powerful statements of them are new and have yet to receive direct responses from naturalists. Here are just two issues that the field might consider. One is that the position appears to be unstable. If infinite space and eternal time would *enhance* meaning in our lives, they would do so to such an enormous extent as to make it unreasonable to judge an 80-year life on earth to be capable of being meaningful at all. It would be like saying that a house can be big, even if it would be bigger were it to grow to be the size of a billion billion billion suns. Perhaps when it comes to God, meaning is all or nothing (cf. Craig 2013, p. 160).

Another issue is whether the opportunity for greater meaning with God might not be offset by the corresponding opportunity for greater "anti-matter" (Metz 2013a, pp. 63–64, 71–72, 234–235) or "anti-meaning" (Campbell and Nyholm 2015), conditions that detract from the amount of meaning in a life. For example, if one's good deeds and God's being pleased about them would produce a much greater significance for one's existence than would be possible in a world without him, then presumably one's bad deeds and his displeasure at them would reduce the significance of one's life to a correspondingly much greater degree. Indeed, the chances would be greater of one's life becoming not merely *meaningless* (*lacking* any meaning) but also negative with regard to meaning, in the way that pain is the substantive disvalue of pleasure and is not the mere absence of the latter.

In short, if the prospective gains with God would be much greater, then so would the prospective losses, and it is not clear yet which world, theist or atheist, would be reasonable to wish for in the light of an interest in living a meaningful life. That is particularly so upon considering other respects in which naturalists have contended that God would reduce meaning, setting aside considerations of how his existence might threaten to do so in the wake of providing the ability to have much more of it.

God as Detracting from Meaning

A fascinating subfield in the philosophy of religion has blossomed just in the past ten years, about whether we should prefer that God not exist, or whether the world would be worse in certain respects (or on balance) if he did. Some of these debates are explicitly about meaning in life, and, insofar as they contend that God's existence would somehow undermine life's meaningfulness, they are the focus of this section.

Claims that God would make it harder to live a meaningful life trace back to Jean-Paul Sartre (1989), who in his influential 1946 lecture "Existentialism Is a Humanism" claimed that God's existence would mean our degradation, that God could not avoid treating us as an object insofar as he created us with a purpose in mind. The objection was echoed by Kurt Baier in an influential (1957) lecture "The Meaning of Life," and it has continued to be voiced.

The most common concern is about a lack of "complete independence," that if God exists then we live in a "world where we are the subordinates of a moral superior, a superior that deserves our allegiance and worship, and where we have been created to play a part in some divine cosmic plan" (Kahane 2011, p. 682). Likewise, it is suggested that God could not avoid reducing our "self-creative autonomy"; we would not be "self-employed" when it comes to living our lives but would rather be "working for" a boss (Mawson 2016). An interesting variant proposes that in order to prevent an unfair condition in which some are more able to achieve God's purpose than others, God would have to tailor-make each of us to achieve a single purpose, which would be restrictive, manipulative or otherwise degrading of our freedom (Salles 2010).

Notice that these points need not invoke the idea that God would threaten us with eternal damnation for failing to abide by his will. Although the issue of penalties for disobedience is not irrelevant to these debates (on which see, e.g., Davis 2014, pp. 148–150), philosophers have realized that it is not essential to them.

In reply, some point out that, even if God could not avoid degrading us in a certain way and reducing some meaning in our lives thereby, he would make up for that by uniquely enabling a much greater meaning. On the whole when it comes to meaning, we would gain from God, so goes one response (e.g., Kraay and Dragos 2013). Another kind of reply disputes that complete independence, self-creative autonomy or the like is essential for a meaningful life. After all, meaning would surely not come from freely deciding to become a serial killer, while God could and would plausibly allow human persons enough of the intuitively important sorts of freedom (e.g., Metz 2013c; Penner 2015, pp. 334–337; Cottingham 2016b, pp. 125–127).

Other suggestions about why God might reduce the meaning available to us are that he would obliterate our privacy and would make it impossible for us to understand what makes the universe tick (Kahane 2011). God would know everything in our minds, while we could not become aware of the contents of his, infinite mind.

Might the loss of privacy not matter since God would be sure to love us (Penner 2015, pp. 336–337)? Might God being the source of the universe in fact provide us more knowledge about it (Swinburne 2016, p. 154)? Or if theism would mean undesirable losses of privacy and understanding, would they be losses of meaning in life or instead of some other value?

These and many other contested issues discussed in this chapter indicate that, despite the longstanding debate between theists and atheists about the nature of what exists, thought about which sort of reality would be meaningful lags behind. May this overview of contemporary philosophy about how atheism would bear on life's meaning spur readers to contribute to it.

Note

- 1 There is an English translation of Salles (2010), by Ana Terra Skosana, in the possession of the author of this chapter.

References

- Affolter, J. (2007) "Human nature as God's purpose." *Religious Studies* 43: 443–455.
- Baier, K. (1957) "The meaning of life." *Inaugural lecture, Australian National University*. Canberra: Government printer.
- Bennett-Hunter, G. (2014) *Ineffability and Religious Experience*. London: Pickering & Chatto.
- Bennett-Hunter, G. (2016) Ineffability. *Philosophia*, 44: 1267–1287.
- Blessing, K. (2013) "Atheism and the meaningfulness of life," in S. Bullivant and M. Ruse (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 104–118.
- Campbell, S., and Nyholm, S. (2015) "Anti-meaning and why it matters." *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 1: 694–711.
- Cottingham, J. (2005) *The Spiritual Dimension: Religion, Philosophy and Human Value*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cottingham, J. (2016a) "Theism and meaning in life." *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 8: 47–58.
- Cottingham, J. (2016b) "Meaningfulness, eternity, and theism," in J. Seachris and S. Goetz (eds.) *God and Meaning: New Essays*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 123–136.
- Craig, W. L. (2013) "The absurdity of life without God," in J. Seachris (ed.) *Exploring the Meaning of Life: An Anthology and Guide*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 153–172.
- Davis, S. (2014) "On preferring that God not exist (or that God exist)." *Faith and Philosophy* 31: 143–159.
- Dougherty, T. (2016) "Belief that life has meaning confirms that life has meaning," in J. Seachris and S. Goetz (eds.) *God and Meaning: New Essays*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 81–98.
- Frankfurt, H. (1982) "The importance of what we care about." *Synthese*, 53: 257–272.
- Hartshorne, C. (1984) "God and the meaning of life," in L. Rouser (ed.) *Boston University Studies in Philosophy and Religion, Vol. 6: On Nature*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, pp. 154–168.
- Kahane, G. (2011) "Should we want God to exist?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 82: 674–696.
- Kahane, G. (2014) "Our cosmic insignificance." *Noûs* 48: 745–772.
- Kekes, J. (2000) "The meaning of life," in P. French and H. Wettstein (eds.) *Midwest Studies in Philosophy, Vol. 24: Life and Death*. Malden: Blackwell, 17–34.
- Kraay, K., and Dragos, C. (2013) "On preferring God's non-existence." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 43: 157–178.
- Mawson, T. (2013) "Recent work on the meaning of life and philosophy of religion." *Philosophy Compass* 8: 1138–1146.

- Mawson, T. (2016) "What God could (and couldn't) do to make life meaningful," in J. Seachris and S. Goetz (eds.) *God and Meaning: New Essays*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 37–58.
- Megill, J., and Linford, D. (2016) "God, the meaning of life, and a new argument for atheism." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 79: 31–47.
- Metz, T. (2013a) *Meaning in Life: An Analytic Study*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Metz, T. (2013b) "The meaning of life," revised edition. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/life-meaning/> (accessed 19 September 2018).
- Metz, T. (2013c) "How God could assign us a purpose without disrespect." *Quadranti*, 1: 99–112.
- Mintoff, J. (2008) "Transcending absurdity." *Ratio* 21: 64–84.
- Nozick, R. (1981) *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Penner, M. (2015) "Personal anti-theism and the meaningful life argument." *Faith and Philosophy* 32: 325–337.
- Quinn, P. (2000) "How Christianity secures life's meanings," in J. Runzo and N. Martin (eds.) *The Meaning of Life in the World Religions*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, pp. 53–68.
- Salles, S. (2010) "O Sentido da Vida e o Propósito de Deus." *Fundamento* 1: 84–110.
- Sartre, J-P. (1956) "Existentialism is a humanism," trans. P. Mairet, in W. Kaufmann (ed.) *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre*. London: Meridian, 287–311. Original work published 1946.
- Seachris, J. (2009) "The meaning of life as narrative: A new proposal for interpreting philosophy's 'primary' question." *Philo* 12: 5–23.
- Smith, H. (2000) "The meaning of life in the world's religions," in J. Runzo and N. Martin (eds.) *The Meaning of Life in the World Religions*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, pp. 255–268.
- Smith, Q. (1997) *Ethical and Religious Thought in Analytic Philosophy of Language*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Swinburne, R. (2016) "How God makes life a lot more meaningful," in J. Seachris and S. Goetz (eds.) *God and Meaning: New Essays*. New York: Bloomsbury, pp. 149–164.
- Tartaglia, J. (2015) *Philosophy in a Meaningless Life*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Taylor, R. (1987) "Time and life's meaning." *Review of Metaphysics* 40: 675–686.
- Waghorn, N. (2015) "Metz's incoherence objection: Some epistemological considerations." *Journal of Philosophy of Life*, 5: 150–168.
- Wielenberg, E. (2005) *Value and Virtue in a Godless Universe*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Wielenberg, E. (2016) "Metz's case against supernaturalism" *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 8: 27–34.
- Wolf, S. (2010) *Meaning in Life and Why It Matters*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Further Reading

For additional reading beyond what has been cited in this chapter, see the following:

- Adams, R. (1999) *Finite and Infinite Goods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cottingham, J. (2003) *On the Meaning of Life*. London: Routledge.
- Goetz, S. (2012) *The Purpose of Life: A Theistic Perspective*. New York: Continuum.
- Gordon, J. (1983) "Is the existence of God relevant to the meaning of life?" *Modern Schoolman* 60: 227–246.
- Hooker, B. (2008) "The meaning of life: Subjectivism, objectivism, and divine support," in N. Athanassoulis and S. Vice (eds.) *The Moral Life: Essays in Honour of John Cottingham*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 184–200.
- Kekes, J. (2010) *The Human Condition*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Martin, M. (2002) *Atheism, Morality, and Meaning* Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.

- May, T. (2015) *A Significant Life: Human Meaning in a Silent Universe*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Morris, T. (1992) *Making Sense of It All: Pascal and the Meaning of Life*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Singer, I. (1996) *Meaning of Life, Vol. 1, The Creation of Value*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Thomson, G. (2003) *On the Meaning of Life*. South Melbourne: Wadsworth.
- Trisel, B. A. (2012) "Intended and unintended life." *Philosophical Forum* 43: 395–403.
- Walker, L. (1989) "Religion and the meaning of life and death," in L. Pojman (ed.) *Philosophy: The Quest for Truth*. Belmont: Wadsworth, pp. 167–171.
- Wolf, S. (1997) "Meaningful lives in a meaningless world." *Quaestiones Infnitae*, Vol. 19. Utrecht: Utrecht University, pp. 1–22.
- Young, J. (2003) *The Death of God and the Meaning of Life*. New York: Routledge.

Normative Skepticism

SUSANA NUCCETELLI

Normative skepticism is a family of negative claims about the epistemic standing of judgment within one or more substantive normative systems, from the systems of logic, modality, and the law to the systems of morality and practical reason. As understood hereafter, it includes any meta-normative doctrine that makes such negative claims about the epistemic standing of first-order judgments with moral normativity. Of interest here is not to argue for or against normative skepticism. Rather, it is to assess whether normative skepticism succeeds in generating a *reductio* of two realist doctrines with substantial normative implications: theism (i.e., realism about God as standardly conceived in the main monotheistic traditions) and normative realism (i.e., realism about normative properties and facts). After characterizing these doctrines, this chapter examines some evolutionary debunking arguments (EDAs) and contends that each entails a very implausible type of normative skepticism. Given those arguments, realism of either kind is vulnerable to a non-logical *reductio* because of the evolutionary etiology of judgments in the relevant domain. Our exploration will suggest that, beyond a common initial vulnerability to EDAs, normative realism and theism are disanalogous in significant respects. One disanalogy involves the resources for responding to EDAs available to each of these doctrines. Another concerns some objections facing theism that need not worry secular varieties of normative realism. But before turning to the debunkers' arguments against either type of realism, let's first have a closer look at the kind of normative skepticism whose consequences are considered so bad that they amount to a *reductio* of any doctrine entailing them.

What's Wrong with Normative Skepticism

Characterizing Normative Skepticism

Normative skepticism makes negative claims of varying strength about the standing of first-order normative judgments as warranted beliefs or reasons to do some moral acts. Although all skeptics call into question that judgments within a substantial normative system such as the system of morality can sometimes express a warranted true belief eligible for knowledge, only some normative skeptics deny such judgments provide reasons to do some moral acts. Thus normative skepticism may be an epistemological or a non-epistemological view. When morality is the normative domain under skeptical doubt, epistemological normative skepticism denies that there are at least some moral judgments that meet all necessary conditions for knowledge; non-epistemological skepticism denies that there is always a moral reason to do some moral act. These two views are compatible but independent: a commitment to one does not entail a commitment to the other (Sinnott-Armstrong 2006, p. 11); 1995, p. 42). The picture that emerges is:

1. *Practical normative skepticism*: The doctrine that there isn't always a good reason (other than perhaps self-interest) to do what the norms of a substantial normative system prescribe.
2. *Epistemological normative skepticism*: The doctrine that no normative judgment of a substantial normative system meets one or more necessary conditions for qualifying as knowledge.

In what follows, unless otherwise indicated, I'll be referring to normative skepticism type (2). After all, any compelling debunking argument to the effect that a doctrine entails (2) would be strong enough to undermine, and therefore in some sense "debunk," that doctrine. But (2) faces the problem that epistemologists have yet to reach consensus, not only about what else is necessary for turning warranted true belief into knowledge, but also about how to understand these three conditions of the traditional analysis of knowledge. Luckily, for my purposes here I can ignore these disagreements¹ and take epistemological normative skepticism to be the negative thesis that no normative judgment expresses a belief, or is true, or has an adequate epistemic warrant. Thus (2) breaks down to:

- a. *Normative skepticism about truth*: The doctrine that no normative judgment is true.
- b. *Normative skepticism about attitude-type and content*: The doctrine that no normative judgment amounts to a belief or any other cognitive attitude with a propositional content.
- c. *Normative skepticism about epistemic access*: The doctrine that no normative judgment has epistemic warrant.

A number of meta-normative theories have ontological and semantical commitments that engender normative skepticism of at least one of these kinds. Error theories, for example, have an austere conception of what there is that commits them to (a), from which (c) follows under a certain reliabilist understanding of epistemic warrant.

For given their austere ontology, there are no normative properties and facts, so that no normative judgments can be true except for negative judgments of the form “It is false that killing babies for fun is wrong.” Since knowledge requires truth, it follows that normative judgments cannot amount to knowledge. Furthermore, failing systematically to be true, normative beliefs cannot be the result of a reliable belief-forming mechanism. On the other hand, non-cognitivist theories are eligible for normative skepticism because their semantics of the normative commits them to (b), and in some instances also to (a). Their consensus about (b) derives from their view that normative judgments do not express cognitive attitudes but rather *pro* and *con* attitudes. Failing to amount to beliefs, these attitudes are not eligible for knowledge.

Error theories and non-cognitivism thus illustrate how pressures from a certain ontology or semantics of the normative can lead to normative skepticism. But of course, for proponents of these views such skeptical results are but a small price to pay for holding the right ontology and semantics. Besides, some strategies to mitigate normative skepticism’s bad effects appear available. Maybe error theorists could invoke prudential reasons (Mackie 1977; Joyce 2006; cf. Sainsbury 2010), and non-cognitivists and other Humean sentimentalists could invoke some especial epistemic access to our own *pro* and *con* attitudes (Blackburn 2010; Gibbard 2011). But these strategies have no appeal for realism, a broad group of theories traditionally considered the most vulnerable to skeptical challenges.

Normative Skepticism’s Implausible Consequences

Suppose that error theorists and non-cognitivists are in fact able to mitigate any bad consequences of normative skepticism in the ways described above. Even so, neither of those strategies can help theism and some forms of normative realism, especially in light of debunking arguments attempting to show that each entails a thoroughgoing form of normative skepticism. That such skepticism has some bad consequences is a claim most evident in the case of morality. To begin with, moral skepticism conflicts with common intuitions about the role of moral judgment in common explanations and prescriptions of agents’ actions and beliefs. Consider some ordinary moral platitudes such as that in most circumstances pain is bad, that we ought to care about the welfare of our children, and that competent humans who kill persons for no good reason are morally depraved. Platitudes of this sort play a significant role in common answers to questions about why an agent acts, omits to act, or holds certain beliefs. Why did Hitler commit genocide? – because he was morally depraved (cf. Sturgeon 1984). Why do neonatologists’ standardly deny resuscitation to very premature newborns? – because survival for them means facing a life of intractable severe pain, and pain is bad. Moral platitudes also play a leading role in folk prescriptions concerning what an agent should do or believe morally, as evident in lower-level injunctions, such as that physicians should do no harm (i.e., avoid inflicting uncompensated pain on patient), that parents should make medical decisions in the best interests of their children, and that police officers should be cautious in the use of deadly force.

In addition, the default, unreflective, ordinary views of moral judgment presuppose the truth of realism, representationalism, and *non*-skepticism. Given realism and representationalism, at least some such judgments are about, and truly represent,

moral facts that exist independently of our conceptions of them – a realistic intuition that is especially strong for seemingly true moral claims in the indicative mood. Given non-skepticism, many moral judgments can, and some do, have the epistemic standing of warranted belief. People ordinarily assert with confidence sentences such as that, under most circumstances, pain is bad, killing persons for no reason wrong, and so on. All these suggest that normative skepticism is a view deeply at odds with common moral practice.

But as construed by debunkers, normative skepticism is a radical view with far more serious bad consequences. For one thing, it has the potential to undermine the characteristic authority of moral judgment – and with it, our confidence in morality as a whole. At the very least, “it can lead a person to view moral commitment as optional, in the way that we think a commitment to daily outdoor exercise is optional” (Copp (1991: 204). Or moral commitment may reduce to a mere matter of opinion and culture, as held by moral subjectivists and cultural relativists. Furthermore, normative skepticism may easily spread from morality to practical reason, leading to the implausible view that there is never a good reason for acting morally (Street 2006; 2014). But then there would be no morally good grounds whatsoever for cultivating good traits of character or for acting or refraining to act in a certain morally relevant way. And since moral accountability crucially depends on deontic judgments (Smith 2005), which would have no normative force, there would be no morally good grounds for making an agent the object of moral praise or blame on the basis of her acts, omissions, or beliefs. With nothing in the offing for moral guidance, agents would be morally paralyzed (Almeida and Oppy 2003, Street 2006). Even if they could appeal to prudential reason, this might fall short of providing the guidance necessary for complex moral decision-making. Accordingly, meta-normative theories try to steer clear of any entanglement with this radical view, which is precisely the one at stake in the EDAs against theism and normative realism.

Clearly, since normative skepticism conflicts with the default position in moral deliberation and has a number of highly implausible consequences, the burden of argument is on its defenders – something that even the skeptics wish to acknowledge (e.g., Sinnott-Armstrong (2006, p. 14). Of course, having that burden or the above bad consequences amounts *per se* to no reason for rejecting a view that’s likely to be true. At issue here, however, are not arguments for normative skepticism. Rather, I’ll assume henceforth that no such argument is compelling, and turn to the views most vulnerable to the charge that they entail normative skepticism.

The Normative-Skepticism Problem for Theism and Normative Realism

Characterizing Theism and Normative Realism

Both theism and normative realism are special types of realism. Theism amounts to realism about God as standardly conceived in the Judeo-Christian and Muslim monotheistic traditions; normative realism amounts to realism about the normative concepts and facts that substantial normative systems are about. Like other types of realism,

these too are best construed as special cases of general realism, a view about the ontological status of any individual, property, or fact of a certain kind x according to which

- (1) There is x .
- (2) x exists independently of our responses to it.
- (3) x typically contributes to the propositional content of some sentences and beliefs.
- (4) At least some of those sentences and beliefs are true.

Special types of realism result by replacing x with, for example, the objects of science, including unobservable objects in the case of scientific realism, and the middle-size objects of perception in the case of metaphysical realism (Devitt 1984; Brink 1984). Theism, one of the two special types of realism relevant here, is the result of replacing x with God and the attributes standardly predicated of him within the main monotheistic traditions – namely, being omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect. Thus construed, theism is the view that a response-independent God with those attributes exists, and contributes to the propositional content of theistic sentences and beliefs.

Normative realism, the other special type of realism relevant here, is the result of replacing x with the most basic or definitionally prior normative properties and facts of a substantial normative system. In some ontologies of the normative, these turn out to be deontic properties and facts, in others, evaluative properties and facts. Either way, thus construed normative realism is the view that:

- Normative properties and facts exist independently of our conceptions, and thus, of our cognitive attitudes toward them.
- Those properties and facts contribute to the content of some, possibly many, sentences and beliefs.
- Of such sentences and beliefs, some are true in a manner far more robust than that of, say, “Right actions are morally justified” and “Murder is wrongful killing.”

Owing to these ontological and semantical commitments, all normative realists countenance that at least some normative judgments are true by virtue of representing some response-independent normative truths. But this view calls for an adequate explanation of how true normative beliefs happen to capture the normative truths. Only with such an account in hand can the realists respond to a debunking objection charging that, given the likelihood that normative beliefs have been shaped by factors irrelevant to those beliefs’ being true, they lack epistemic warrant. Theism faces a similar debunking charge, given the likelihood that theistic beliefs have been shaped also by factors such as evolution or culture, which are indifferent to those beliefs’ being true.

Note that if debunkers can mount a compelling charge along these lines, that would greatly undermine these two forms of realism, but it would not count as a refutation or apodictic *reductio* for either of them. In addition, it doesn’t really matter whether debunkers cast their charge in terms of the epistemic warrant, justification, access, or reliability of normative belief, provided they interpret their preferred notion broadly enough to avoid making epistemic demands on normative realism and theism that no doctrine could meet. In addition, debunkers cannot succeed with a skeptical challenge

so general and powerful that any ontologies of the normative, including their own, would be infected by it – as might result from the use of Cartesian evil-demon or infinite regress arguments. And of course, their challenge cannot assume the nonexistence of God or of normative truths since that would beg the question against theism and normative realism respectively. With these constraints in mind, let's consider the EDAs facing each.

The Evolutionary Debunking of Theism

Consider an evolutionary debunking of theism inspired in Atran's (2006) and Kitcher's (2011) proposals for the evolutionary genealogy of belief systems such as the systems of religion and morality. It hypothesizes that evolution has favored beliefs that can help survival and reproductive success by contributing to the solution of problems originally faced by our hominid ancestors, some of which are still faced by us today. Any such problem amounts to a background from which to understand the function of a belief system. Unlike perceptual beliefs and beliefs from other systems whose truths may help the promotion of survival and reproductive success, theistic beliefs have been selected by evolution in ways irrelevant to their getting things right. They were evolutionarily selected not because of their truth but because of their function in the remedying some "problem background." Perhaps, theism was selected because of its function in generating positive feelings that could help humans cope with existential anxieties created by such factors as the inevitability of death and the constant threat of deception by others. Since these problems might be inherent to the human condition, theism still serves the function for which it was originally selected by evolution. Theists are perhaps still today better able to come to terms with such existential questions than agnostics and atheists, and thus have, on the whole, lives happier than those of nonbelievers and disbelievers in the existence of God (Atran 2006).

Suppose theism does serve a function such as that of remedying either these or other existential anxieties. And suppose that appeal to the evolutionary genealogy of theistic belief is the best explanation of why religious practices originated and persist in all cultures and why people often devote extraordinary time and emotional-energy resources to them. Clearly, if the belief that God exists was selected by evolution for its tendency to help us cope with such existential anxieties, this hypothesis amounts to a debunking account of theism. For humans would tend to have theistic beliefs whether or not they are getting things right – that is, whether or not they are the product of mechanisms that produce mostly beliefs that are *true* in the robust sense of truth at stake for realism.

Any appeal to the evolutionary genealogy of theistic belief along these lines plainly raises a skeptical challenge for theism. But how does it entail skepticism about the kinds of moral reasons there are? That is, how does it entail *normative* skepticism? The route is fairly direct, since theism can be shown to carry substantial normative implications regarding what moral reasons there are for action and belief. After all, given theism, God is the ultimate source of normativity. But then since theism itself shows up as a blip on the skeptical radar owing to its evolutionary origin, if theism is unwarranted, there is no warranted source of moral guidance at all. To support that, given theism,

God is the ultimate and perhaps only source of normativity, we need only look at the substantial normative commitments of the Judeo-Christian and Muslim monotheistic traditions. These all point to God as the ultimate source of normativity, whether or not theists further embrace a divine command theory of that source. For theists who do so, God must surely be the ultimate (and only) source of moral guidance. For theists who reject the divine command theory, God must still be at least the ultimate source of moral guidance: since he has all the moral virtues and no vices, he must be the supreme moral exemplar whose actions indicate to us what to do and believe morally. But then the evolutionary debunking of belief in the existence of such a being also has a tendency to show that, given theism, normative belief lacks warrant.

Similar conclusions about theism's commitment to normative skepticism have been reached by appeal to the problem of evil. Although that problem falls beyond the scope of this chapter, let's note two lines of skeptical charge against theism stemming from it. One first argues for the premise that theism has substantial moral implications and then uses it to charge that, "[w]hen combined with non-normative observations about what [evil] actually happens in the universe, it necessarily entails conclusions concerning what good moral reasons for actions there are" (Street 2014: 178). Since those conclusions are implausibly skeptical, this objector concludes that theism is itself implausible. The other focuses on skeptical theism, a variety of theism designed to mitigate the bad normative consequences of the problem of evil by claiming that we lack the capacity to grasp moral truths to a degree necessary for evaluating God's moral reasoning in allowing evil (Bergmann and Kain (2014, p. 3). This objector charges that even skeptical theism entails some morally crippling consequences about what good moral reasons there are for action and belief.² But objections such as these, based on the problem of evil, need not worry normative realism, a view that nonetheless shares with theism the threat of normative skepticism stemming from evolutionary debunking.

The Evolutionary Debunking of Normative Realism

A basic EDA against normative realism aims at undermining this view by showing that it implies the implausible consequences of normative skepticism. It runs along these lines:

- (1) Given the significant role played by evolutionary pressures in the shaping of substantial normative systems, our normative beliefs have arisen in ways irrelevant to their being true.
- (2) Evolutionary pressures have played a significant role in the shaping of normative systems.
- (3) *Therefore*, our normative beliefs have arisen in ways irrelevant to their being true.
- (4) If our normative beliefs have arisen in ways irrelevant to their being true, then normative realism is committed to normative skepticism.
- (5) *Therefore*, normative realism is committed to normative skepticism.
- (6) Normative skepticism is very implausible.
- (7) *Therefore*, normative realism is very implausible.³

A key premise in getting this attempt at debunking realism off the ground is (2), according to which normative systems are the direct or indirect product of evolution by natural and social selection. Early advanced by Darwin himself (1871) for the system of morality, this hypothesis not only remains highly speculative (as evident in Kitcher 2011) but continues to be the subject of reasoned doubt (Nagel 2012; Huemer 2016). But let's assume that some version of that hypothesis is correct and that so is the consequent of (1). After all, the hypothesis that Darwinian evolution does not favor normative beliefs because of their truth is widely accepted in the evolutionary ethics literature. Philip Kitcher (2006, p. 176), for example, emphasizes that for the system of morality, "[t]he criterion of success isn't accurate representation, but the improvement of social cohesion in ways that promote the transmission of the system itself." And Richard Joyce (2006, p. 182) reminds us that "[w]e have no reason to think in the case of the moral sense that natural selection is likely to have produced true beliefs." The conditional of these two hypotheses, together with (2) necessitates conclusion (3). Once normative realists have accepted this much, they appear stuck with (4), the conditional that if our normative beliefs have arisen in ways irrelevant to their being true, then normative realism is committed to normative skepticism. Unless of course they could show that some moral beliefs enjoy epistemic warrant in spite of the evolutionary origin of morality. If they cannot, they seem saddled with the problem that, if some normative beliefs turn out to be true, that would be a miraculous coincidence.⁴

At the same time, now that realists are aware of the likely etiology of normative belief, they seem committed to holding that it lacks epistemic warrant, either by externalist or internalist standards of warrant – where normative belief has (i) an externalist epistemic warrant if and only if it is the outcome of a reliable-forming mechanism, and (ii) an internalist epistemic warrant if and only if it meets an acceptable standard of justification that excludes being aware that normative belief is the product of an unreliable belief-forming mechanism. Warrant of either type is unavailable if strong evidence suggests that mechanisms for forming normative belief are, given their Darwinian origin, as unreliable as tea-leaf reading and card throwing.⁵ Although debunkers cannot show a similar level of unreliability for normative belief, they plausibly argue that knowing a belief's unreliable etiology can sometimes undermine "the confidence one should have in that belief" (Joyce 2006, p. 182). Thus, if we know that, given their etiology, normative beliefs are the product of unreliable belief-forming mechanisms, that would undermine their warrant, understood as either (i) or (ii) above. So an EDA against normative realism can now be construed as an explanatory challenge facing realists, stemming from their apparent empty hands when it comes to adequately explaining how beliefs so produced can enjoy epistemic warrant – which in turn requires to explain how some of those beliefs capture some response-independent normative truths. Here is a clear statement of this concern:

Evolutionary forces have played a tremendous role in shaping the content of human evaluative attitudes. The challenge for realist theories of value is to explain the relation between these evolutionary influences on our evaluative attitudes, on the one hand, and the independent evaluative truths that realism posits, on the other. Realism, I argue, can give no satisfactory account of this relation. (Street 2006, p. 109)

Is Either Theism or Normative Realism Debunked?

As we have seen, both theism and normative realism face a skeptical challenge based on a premise seemingly supported by strong scientific evidence from evolutionary theory. Given that challenge, realists about either substantial normative systems or God appear committed to holding that belief in their respective domains lacks epistemic warrant. But if so, then the very implausible type of normative skepticism described above follows without further argument in the case of normative realism, and via a demonstration that theistic belief has substantial normative implications in the case of theism. Although this line of argument does not aim at providing a positive defense of anti-realist views of religion or morality, if successful, it would indirectly support agnosticism or even atheism about God, and normative irre realism or even nihilism about normative properties and facts.⁶

To meet this considerable challenge, theism and normative realism must produce a plausible account of how the relevant beliefs capture some response-independent truths in their respective domains – that is, each has to dispel the appearance that beliefs within its domain, which are causally or constitutively inert in the sense that they are not responsible for the independent truths they are about, by a miraculous coincidence happen to be true. The challenge each faces is then that of adequately accounting for the correlation it postulates between some relevant beliefs and the independent truths (cf. Enoch 2010, p. 422). I'll now consider some reasons for thinking that, of these two realist positions, the prospects for coming up with such an account look much better for normative realism.

First, note that while theism faces the skeptical challenge across the board, not all forms of normative realism do. Reductive normative realism has some relatively easy escape routes. For if, as the so-called Cornell realists maintain (Boyd 1988; Brink 1989; Sturgeon 2006), some normative properties and facts are natural properties and facts, belief about such synthetic equivalences are warranted empirically – namely, by observation and inference to the best explanation. And if, as analytical descriptivists maintain (Jackson 1998; Smith 2000), the predicates and sentences of a normative vocabulary translate, without any normative remainder, into some predicates and sentences of a purely descriptive vocabulary, such analytic equivalences are warranted *a priori*. Either way, these normative realisms are in principle immune to skeptical challenge from EDAs.

But a non-reductive type of normative realism – sometimes called “robust realism,” “intuitionistic realism,” and “non-naturalism” – lacks those empirical and *a priori* resources to meet the skeptical challenge in those ways. This is because it adds to realism's core claims the thesis that some (possibly many) normative beliefs and sentences truly represent response-independent facts that are *irreducibly* normative. Contemporary robust realists no longer expect to meet skeptical challenges by appeal to a moral sense or faculty specialized in apprehending normative truths. They acknowledge that, unlike perception, there is no evidence of the existence or workings of such a dedicated sense. By and large, they rely instead on developing a broader faculty-vindication epistemological strategy according to which normative belief's warrant is identical to, or a kind of, the same *a priori* warrant that grounds mathematical, logical, or modal beliefs (Huemer 2005; 2016; Shafer-Landau 2012).⁷

It is unclear whether this strategy is available to theism. For one thing, so far no sound version of the best *a priori* argument for the existence of God, the ontological argument, is in the offing. And an *a priori* warrant for existential beliefs is more difficult to substantiate than *a priori* warrants for, say, moral or modal principles, which might even be eligible for the status of conceptual truths (Cuneo and Shaffer-Landau 2014).

Furthermore, theists cannot avail themselves of a “third-factor theory,” another strategy that robust realists offer in response to EDAs. In order to dispel the appearance of miraculous coincidence created by an EDA, this strategy postulates a third factor regarded as what establishes a harmony between normative belief and the corresponding normative truth. The hope here is that a few beliefs that are warranted in this way can serve as the basis for expanding the scope of warrant in the domain. Accordingly, the strategy acknowledges that (i) evolution has pushed normative belief to a certain end, but also holds that (ii) such an end is independently valuable and (iii) evolution has thus favored beliefs that are beneficial without thereby “tracking” the normative truth. That end or third factor can be as minimal as that survival is good (Enoch 2010), that pain is bad (Skarsaune 2010), or that beings with complex psychological capacities have rights (Wielenberg 2010). Plausibly, we were “pushed” by evolution to have beliefs with one of these contents, which favored independently valuable ends. Since those beliefs tended to be true, the relation between normative beliefs and the normative truths isn’t a miraculous coincidence after all.

Whatever the merits of the third-factor theory, as in the case of the faculty-vindication response to EDAs, it is unclear how theism could avail itself of such anti-skeptical strategy. But there is a third, and last, disanalogy to be discussed here. It concerns a distinctive ontological commitment that theism has but robust realism need not have with respect to the causal power of relevant properties and facts. Given robust realism, normative properties and facts need not have causal powers; but given theism, God must have such powers. As a result, theism but not robust realism is undermined by a plausible constraint on an adequate explanation of events in the natural world:

The Explanatory Requirement: If a natural event can be better explained without positing the existence of x (entities, properties, or facts of a certain kind), then that’s a reason for rejecting the existence of x .

With a long tradition in science and philosophy, the Explanatory Requirement has been instrumental in weeding out each of these fields of spooky entities and facts, from pseudo-scientific ones involving phlogiston and ether to pseudo-philosophical ones involving vital forces and other entelechies. It is easy to see that theism, but not robust realism, is undermined by this constraint because, as Russ Shaffer-Landau (2006, p. 323) argues:

The job description of normative facts does not include the possession of explanatory power ... By contrast, the job description of God does include explanatory power. Indeed, such power is causal-explanatory power, which, moreover, must sometimes be exercised. God must, at the least, get the universe going, and will further, to all but deists, intervene in our affairs at least occasionally in such a way as to vitiate the causal closure of the natural.

Theism thus faces a problem, since it must not only produce a supernaturalist account of events in the world that can compete with naturalistic explanations, but given the Explanatory Requirement, it must show that such an account is what best explains those events. Yet it isn't obvious how theists can accomplish that. For the supernaturalist account appears to stand no chance when compared with naturalistic explanations, which score higher in virtues such as simplicity, accuracy, and doxastic conservatism among others. As a result, it isn't obvious how theistic belief can avoid the charge of being epistemically unwarranted (Shafer-Landau 2006, pp. 322–323). By contrast, robust realists commonly hold that the normative supervenes on the non-normative. They can therefore vindicate the autonomy of the normative without committing themselves to the view that normative facts have causal powers and thus, that normative belief may best explain events in the natural world. As a result, the epistemic warrant of normative belief is not undermined by a plausible explanatory requirement. On the basis of these disanalogies, I submit that theism, rather than any of the three forms of normative realism discussed here, has much to worry about the skeptical consequences of debunking arguments.

Notes

- 1 That is, I'll ignore current controversies in epistemology about (i) how to construe the three traditional conditions for knowledge and (ii) what the fourth, still unsettled, condition that might be deemed necessary for knowledge turns out to be.
- 2 For arguments to the effect that sceptical theism cannot avoid spreading and becoming morally paralyzing, see Almeida and Oppy (2003) and Maitzen (2007).
- 3 Versions of this argument are in, e.g., Joyce (2006), Kitcher (2011), and Street (2006).
- 4 Thus Sharon Street (2006, pp. 121–122) contends that, "allowing our evaluative judgments to be shaped by evolutionary influences is analogous to setting out for Bermuda and letting the course of your boat be determined by the wind and tides: just as the push of the wind and tides on your boat has nothing to do with where you want to go, so the historical push of natural selection on the content of our evaluative judgments has nothing to do with evaluative truth. Of course every now and then, the wind and tides might happen to deposit someone's boat on the shores of Bermuda. Similarly, every now and then, Darwinian pressures might have happened to push us toward accepting an evaluative judgment that accords with one of the realist's independent evaluative truths. But this would be purely a matter of chance, since by hypothesis there is no relation between the forces at work and the 'destination' in question, namely evaluative truth."
- 5 No such challenge has bite against anti-realist theories that take the normative truths to be response-dependent in the way that, for example, colors appear to be. If colors are determined by how we perceive them, an evolutionary account of how we came to have color experiences has no inclinations to be debunking. Similarly, in the domain of morality, if the wrongness of murder is somehow dependent on our responses to it, an appeal to the evolutionary etiology of that judgment is not debunking.
- 6 Russ Shafer-Landau (2007, p. 313) claims that an EDA "does not seek to vindicate atheism, or moral nihilism, but rather to show that any positive theistic or moral belief is epistemically unjustified." But this is at best disingenuous, since the debunking of theism or normative realism would count in favor of competing views.

- 7 True, robust realists need not produce a full-fledged account of normative belief's epistemic warrant. But to fully meet sceptical challenges, they do need an account of how at least some moral beliefs are *in fact* warranted, rather than *possibly* warranted. Cf. Enoch (2010, p. 421).

References

- Almeida, M., and Oppy, G. (2003) "Sceptical theism and evidential arguments from evil." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 81: 496–516.
- Atran, S. (2006) "Religion's innate origins and evolutionary background," in P. Carruthers, S. Laurence, and S. Stich (eds.) *The Innate Mind*, Vol. 2. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 302–317.
- Bergmann, M., and Kain, P. (2014) "Challenges to moral and religious belief: Overview and future directions," in M. Bergmann and P. Kain (eds.) *Challenges to Moral and Religious Belief: Disagreement and Evolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1–19.
- Blackburn, S. (2010) "Sharon Street on the independent normative truth as such." Available at <http://www2.phil.cam.ac.uk/~swb24/PAPERS/Meanstreet.htm> (accessed 19 September 2018).
- Boyd, R. (1988) "How to be a moral realist," in G. Sayre-McCord (ed.) *Essays on Moral Realism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp. 181–228.
- Brink, D. (1984) "Moral realism and the sceptical arguments from disagreement and queerness." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 62: 111–125.
- Brink, D. (1989) *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cuneo, T., and Shafer-Landau, R. (2014) "The moral fixed points: New directions for moral non-naturalism." *Philosophical Studies* 171: 399–443.
- Darwin, C. (1871) *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*. London: John Murray.
- Devitt, M. (1984) *Realism and Truth*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Enoch, D. (2010) "The epistemological challenge to meta-normative realism: How best to understand it, and how to cope with it." *Philosophical Studies* 148: 413–438.
- Gibbard, A. (2011) "How much realism? Evolved thinkers and normative concepts," in R. Shafer-Landau (ed.) *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, Vol. 6, Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 33–51.
- Huemer, M. (2005) *Ethical intuitionism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Huemer, M. (2016) "A liberal realist answer to debunking sceptics: The empirical case for realism." *Philosophical Studies* 173: 1983–2010.
- Jackson, F. (1998) *From Metaphysics to Ethics: A Defence of Conceptual Analysis*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Joyce, R. (2006) *The Evolution of Morality*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Kitcher, P. (2006) "Biology and ethics," in D. Copp (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 163–185.
- Kitcher, P. (2011) *The Ethical Project*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Mackie, J. (1977) *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. New York: Penguin.
- Maitzen, S. (2007) "Sceptical theism and God's commands." *Sophia* 46: 235–242.
- Nagel, T. (2012) *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sainsbury, R. (2010) *Fiction and Fictionalism*. New York: Routledge.
- Shafer-Landau, R. (2006) "Moral reasons," in R. Shafer-Landau and T. Cuneo (eds.) *Foundations of Ethics: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 312–327.
- Shafer-Landau, R. (2007) "Moral and theological realism: The Explanatory Argument." *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 4: 311–329.

- Shafer-Landau, R. (2012) "Evolutionary debunking, moral realism and moral knowledge." *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* 7: 1–37.
- Sinnott-Armstrong, W. (1995) "Moral scepticism and justification," in W. Sinnott-Armstrong and M. Timmons (eds.) *Moral Knowledge? New Readings in Moral Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 3–48.
- Sinnott-Armstrong, W. (2006) *Moral Scepticisms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Skarsaune, K. (2010) "Darwin and moral realism: Survival of the iffiest." *Philosophical Studies* 152: 2229–2243.
- Smith, M. (2000) "Moral realism," in H. LaFollette (ed.) *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 15–37.
- Smith, M. (2005) "Meta-ethics," in F. Jackson and M. Smith (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 3–30.
- Street, S. (2006) "A Darwinian dilemma for realist theories of value." *Philosophical Studies* 127: 109–166.
- Street, S. (2014) "If everything happens for a reason, then we don't know what reasons are: Why the price of theism is normative scepticism," in M. Bergmann and P. Kain (eds.) *Challenges to Moral and Religious Belief: Disagreement and Evolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 173–192.
- Sturgeon, N. (1984) "Moral explanations," in D. Copp and D. Zimmerman (eds.) *Morality, Reason and Truth*. Totowa: Rowman & Allanheld, 49–78.
- Sturgeon, N. (2006) "Ethical naturalism," in D. Copp (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 91–121.
- Wielenberg, E. (2010) "On the evolutionary debunking of morality." *Ethics* 120: 441–464.

Part VII

Politics

Education

JENNIFER BLEAZBY

This chapter examines key arguments for and against the teaching of religion and ethics in schools. These arguments are examined within the context of the controversy that erupted when philosophy based ethics classes were introduced into state primary schools in New South Wales (NSW), Australia, in 2010. The ethics classes, which are attended by 32,000 students (Primary Ethics 2016a), were introduced as an alternative to special religious education (SRE). All NSW state schools are required to run SRE for at least thirty minutes each week. SRE aims to instill in students the beliefs of one particular religion, as opposed to general religious education (GRE), which involves a comparative study of world religions. The introduction of the ethics classes was met with considerable opposition, especially from supporters of SRE. The controversy that ensued led to a parliamentary inquiry, which received over 400 public submissions, as well as widespread media coverage. During the debate, longstanding arguments relating to the teaching of religion, atheism, and ethics in schools were presented. Thus, an analysis of this controversy will highlight the continued relevance of these arguments within a contemporary, secularized society.

Using a Deweyian theoretical framework, I will examine the arguments given for and against SRE and ethics classes. A fundamental aim of schooling should be to foster the capacity for communal inquiry because this capacity is necessary for human flourishing. It will be argued that SRE actually inhibits the student's capacity for communal inquiry, primarily because it aims to indoctrinate. As such, parents should not have the right to enroll their children in SRE because parental rights should be constrained by the best interests of the child. In contrast, philosophy-based ethics classes can be educationally valuable, as they aim to foster communal inquiry. However, it is argued that they are often taught in a problematic manner, as demonstrated by the NSW ethics classes. It is suggested that a general philosophy class would be preferable to both SRE and ethics. Such a course would foster communal inquiry skills and enable students to critically examine a wide range of religious beliefs, as well as atheism.

Special Religious Education and Ethics Classes in New South Wales

Since 1866, all NSW government primary schools have been required to offer Special Religious Education. In 1880, the Public Instruction Act was introduced, which allowed parents to opt out of SRE classes. SRE is not taught by teachers employed in schools but rather by trained volunteers, who are authorized representatives of religious bodies. This is because government school teachers are forbidden from proselytizing as government schooling must “consist of strictly non-sectarian and secular instruction” (Parliament of NSW Legislative Council 2015).

Until 2011, schools were forbidden from running alternative educational programs during the time set aside for SRE, as explained in the government’s religious education policy:

Schools are to support SRE by ensuring that no formal lessons or scheduled school activities occur during time set aside for SRE ... These activities should neither compete with SRE nor be alternative lessons in the subjects within the curriculum or other areas, such as, *ethics, values, civics or general religious education* ... Such activities may create conflict of choice for some parents and for some students attending SRE. (Cited in Parliament of NSW Legislative Council 2012)

It was thought that offering alternatives to SRE would discriminate against religious students and their parents, who would be forced to choose between scripture classes and other educationally valuable activities. However, many parents of children who were not enrolled in SRE claimed that they were being discriminated against because their children were restricted to doing various forms of busy work during SRE time, such as play, watching movies, reading, or free time. The following is one of the many accounts given by such parents:¹

My son was made to feel punished for not partaking in the class and sat in the hallway during the sessions and told to keep quiet ... So I sent a letter to the teacher asking if my son can be given a work sheet or pencil and paper and if not that I would be happy to provide him an alternative, only to receive a phone call basically bullying me to allow him to partake in the class ... On this note, due to being bullied and feeling that there is no alternative in this situation, I find the only solution is to keep my son out of school on that particular day and give him tasks at home and teach him about life, Australian history, and broadening his knowledge on ALL types of religious practices, not just Christianity. (Fairness in Religion in Schools, cited in Babie and Mylius 2012)

It was not only atheist parents who felt discriminated against. Many parents opted out of SRE because classes were not available in their faith. In NSW 80% of SRE is Christian-based (Crawford (2012)). As increasing numbers of Australians identified as atheists and as non-Christian, this arrangement for offering SRE became increasingly untenable.² In 2010, it was estimated that around 20% of students opted out of SRE (Parliament of NSW Legislative Council 2012).

In 2003, the NSW Federation of Parents and Citizens’ Association and the St. James Ethics Centre began lobbying the state government for permission to offer a secular

ethics curriculum as an alternative to SRE. In 2010, permission was given to develop and trial a philosophy-based ethics curriculum for grade 5 and 6 students (i.e., 10–12-year-olds). The ethics curriculum was initially developed by philosopher Philip Cam, a leader in the Philosophy for Children movement. Philosophy for Children involves children participating in philosophical communities of inquiry with the aim of fostering their capacity for critical, creative, and caring thinking (Lipman 2003). Philip Cam's ethics curriculum extended this approach to teaching philosophy, which was first developed by Mathew Lipman in the 1960s. In the ethics classes, students discuss moral dilemmas and undertake small group tasks that prompt them to take up a position on the dilemma. This is followed by a whole-class inquiry. During the inquiry, students are expected to practice a wide range of thinking skills, such as: formulating questions; defining concepts; expressing and justifying opinions; providing reasons and evidence; constructing criteria; and evaluating arguments. The aim is not just to teach students about ethical issues but to foster the capacity for moral reasoning. The pilot ethics curriculum included topics like justice, fairness, lying and telling the truth, graffiti, animal rights, environmental ethics, the good life, children's rights, virtues and vices.

After the successful trial of the ethics curriculum, the 1990 Education Act was amended so as to allow all government primary schools to offer the ethics classes as an alternative to SRE from 2011. However, this decision was met with considerable opposition. In March 2011, the conservative Liberal-National party was elected to govern in NSW, along with two members of the evangelical Christian Democratic Party, led by the Rev. Fred Nile (Crawford 2012). Rev. Nile proposed a bill to repeal the 2010 amendment to the Education Act, which would force the removal of the ethics classes from schools. This led to a parliamentary inquiry into the ethics classes. In 2012, Nile's repeal bill was dismissed, with the inquiry concluding that ethics and SRE should continue to be offered as alternate curricula, so as to provide a "right of choice for students and their parents/carers" (Parliament of NSW Legislative Council 2012, p. ix).³

While many stakeholders seem satisfied with the outcome of the parliamentary inquiry, I believe the current arrangement in NSW schools is problematic. It prioritizes the parent's right to control their children's schooling over the best interests of the child. The parliamentary inquiry's final report frequently refers to article 26 of *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which states that "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children" (United Nations 1948). This right is often used to defend special religious education. However, given that some types of schooling are detrimental to children, article 26 should not be considered an inalienable right. For example, white supremacists should not have a right to home-school their children so as to indoctrinate them with their own racist beliefs. Terrorist organizations should not have a right to school children to be terrorists. As Brighouse (2006) explains, there are constraints upon parental rights. In fact, the rest of article 26 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* suggests some constraints upon the parent's right to choose their child's education: "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups ..." (italics added)

The limits of parental rights, especially the rights of parents to give their children a religious education or upbringing, have been discussed extensively by liberal theorists (e.g., Feinberg 1980; Levinson 1999; Gutmann 1999; Brighouse 2006). The dominant perspective is that the rights of parents are constrained by the best interests of the child. That is, parents do not have the right to make choices that harm their children or violate the child's own rights, many of which are enshrined in the United Nation's 1959 *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*. In general, parents should only be able to choose schooling that enables their children to flourish (Brighouse 2006). The more effective an educational program is at equipping students with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions they need to flourish, the greater is its educational value.

In the remainder of the chapter, I will evaluate the extent to which philosophy-based ethics classes and SRE can promote flourishing. The educational value of these two curricula was not examined in depth by the parliamentary inquiry. If either of these curricula is likely to inhibit the student's ability to flourish then it should be abolished. Even if these curricula do not inhibit flourishing, we should still consider if they might be replaced with a more educational alternative that better promotes flourishing. In order to evaluate the educational value of ethics classes and SRE, we first need some understanding of the general skills, knowledge, and dispositions students need in order to flourish. A comprehensive account of these skills, knowledge, and dispositions can be found in Dewey's 1938 theory of communal inquiry.

Fostering the Capacity for Communal Inquiry as an Educational Aim

The more capable persons are at intelligently adapting themselves and their environment so as to satisfy their needs and interests, the more likely they are to live a healthy and meaningful life. Dewey argued that it is the capacity for communal inquiry that enables individuals to effectively interact with their socio-cultural and physical environment (Dewey 1938, pp. 105–107). Inquiry, which is synonymous with reflective thinking, is initiated when we are exposed to situations that we find confusing or problematic because they interrupt our habitual interaction with the world. We cannot automatically respond to them in a purposeful manner. Inquiry is initiated as the means to reconstructing these problematic situations. The process of inquiry involves imagining the problematic situation as reconstructed into a coherent and meaningful experience; constructing, evaluating, testing, and applying possible solutions so as to reconstruct the problem as imagined; and critically reflecting on the inquiry process. During the inquiry process, we adopt beliefs, habits, and dispositions that enable us to more effectively interact with our environment, and we eliminate from the self those beliefs, habits and dispositions that are detrimental. Thus, inquiry enables growth.

Since our environment is necessarily social and cultural, in order to effectively reconstruct problematic experiences, we must take into account the perspectives, interests, and actions of others, who can act as either obstacles or supports to our intentions. Thus, as Dewey (1938) argues, communal inquiry is preferable to individual inquiry. In communal inquiry we collaboratively investigate shared problems and cooperatively reconstruct experience. Knowledge that results from communal inquiry

is more objective and useful because it has been tried and tested in a more diverse field of experience. It is through this process of communal inquiry that culture is constructed. Culture consists of the common knowledge, beliefs, or practices of a community, including the knowledge encapsulated in the academic disciplines (e.g., science, history, art, philosophy); languages; religions; social systems or structures (e.g., family structures, political systems, economic systems); and traditions, rituals, or practices common to a society. During the inquiry process, we also make use of existing culture (e.g., scientific knowledge) to help us solve problems. Inquiries may also transform existing cultural beliefs and knowledge because culture also forms part of our environment and, as such, it can also act as either an obstacle or support to our intentions. Thus, the more knowledge someone has of existing culture, the more effective they will be at interacting with their social-cultural environment, so long as they are also able to critique, transform, and apply existing culture.

Dewey also argues that communal inquiry gives rise to the capacity for independent thinking. Through internalizing the logical moves and processes that characterize communal inquiry, we learn to question our own beliefs and justify them to ourselves the way we would if we were trying to convince a critical other of our beliefs. However, as Dewey (2004, pp. 82–83) notes, not all communities are equally facilitative of inquiry. Only democratic communities, which value diversity and inclusivity, foster communal inquiry. In democratic communities, people not only engage in communal inquiry with other members of their own community, they also purposefully engage in inquiry with members of other communities. Exposure to different cultures and opinions gives rise to new situations and problems, which leads to further inquiry and the development of more objective knowledge and, ultimately, social and individual growth. Thus, Dewey considers social divisions along class, race, gender, and religious lines to be obstacles to inquiry and growth. For Dewey, a democratic community is the mode of associated living most facilitative of flourishing.

Thus, in order to promote flourishing, schooling must do the following three things: (i) facilitate students' development of the capacity for communal inquiry; (ii) teach students a wide range of culture; and (iii) foster democracy. In the remaining sections we will evaluate the extent to which SRE and philosophy based ethics are able to achieve these aims.

The Educational Value of Special Religious Education

One of the most common criticisms of special religious education is that it aims to indoctrinate (Snook 1972; Hand 2003). This criticism was made in numerous public submissions to the NSW parliamentary inquiry (Parliament of NSW Legislative Council 2012). SRE does not merely teach students *about* a religion. It aims to persuade students to *believe* the truth claims of a religion and become devoted *adherents* of that religion. It is hoped that students will adopt religious beliefs with an unwavering zealotry, internalizing them so that they become part of their personality and whole outlook on life. As such, SRE presents religious doctrines and beliefs as if they are absolute truths that students can simply accept, recite, and act upon. This is despite the fact that much

of the content of SRE consists of highly contentious beliefs – beliefs that have not been verified and for which there is considerable disagreement about their truthfulness (e.g., creationism; intelligent design; the earth being 6000 years old; the existence of God, heaven and hell). The aims of SRE are illustrated by the Sydney Catholic diocese's *Christ our Light and Life* curriculum, which aims to:

[P]rovide an environment in which young children may “*fall in love*” with Jesus the Good Shepherd and develop a real relationship with him. They will discover personal union with God, and their *membership* of a church established by God Christian virtue and Christian *truth* become the *foundation for the whole of life* ... This [teaching] method starts with the presentation of *facts*, and the application of those *facts* to personal life. These *facts* are derived from Scripture, Tradition, and the treasury of Church teaching. The *truths* of Christianity are drawn from these *facts*, *absorbed* by the mind, and *integrated into personal life*. (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine 2015, italics added)

Since religious beliefs are highly contentious, SRE cannot compel students to absorb them by appealing to reason. Thus, SRE relies on other methods to compel belief. Such methods may include psychological power; charm; intimidation; rewards (e.g., teacher approval); fear (e.g., of going to hell, of uncertainty); other appeals to the emotions (e.g., providing a sense of certainty, security, community, self-worth); appeals to authorities; repetition of information and actions (e.g., through preaching, songs, worshipping rituals); threats of social alienation/exclusion; peer pressure; or any means that will “implant beliefs in such a way that they are held non-rationally or non-evidentially” (Hand 2003, p.95; see also Law 2006).

It has long been argued that indoctrination negates the capacity for inquiry (e.g., Plato 1998; Dewey 2004; Neil 1962; Freire 1970; Snook 1972; Hand 2003; Law 2006). Firstly, indoctrination emphasizes lower-order thinking, such as memorization and comprehension. It does not provide students with opportunities to develop and practice higher-order thinking, such as analysis, evaluation, and reasoning. This is because the curriculum content is presented as absolute truths that should be accepted on blind faith. Thus, there are no problems to initiate an inquiry, no competing viewpoints for students to critically compare, and no opportunity to express an opinion and justify it with reasons. Secondly, indoctrination encourages unreasonableness. The contentious beliefs that students are expected to believe are often based on fallacious reasoning or are subject to significant counter-evidence. Ellerton (2010) provides many examples of fallacious reasoning in Christian theology. Thus, in order to accept such beliefs, students must be uncritical and turn a blind eye to fallacious reasoning and counter-evidence. This means that indoctrination fosters dispositions that are incompatible with inquiry. It encourages students to be uncritical, unreasonable, to passively and obediently accept truth claims, and to believe those claims with a zealousness that can render students dogmatic. This is the polar opposite of an inquiring disposition. Inquirers are critical, creative, and reasonable and interact with the world in a transformative manner.

Another common criticism of SRE is that it encourages social divisions and intolerance, making it an obstacle to multiculturalism and democracy. Hand (2003) questions the legitimacy of this criticism, arguing that many providers of SRE promote “social harmony” and “tolerance.” While it is true that many religions preach tolerance,

SRE does seem to undermine democracy in several ways. Firstly, democracy requires more than mere tolerance. Democracy requires intercultural inquiry. Since SRE requires students to be segregated into faith-based groups, it denies students opportunities to engage in inquiries with students of different religious backgrounds. Secondly, as Hand himself argues, SRE always aims to indoctrinate. Indoctrination encourages dispositions like unreasonableness and dogmatism, which are incompatible with intercultural inquiry. It is not possible to engage in inquiry with people who hold very different beliefs to one's own, if one is unwilling to critically reflect on their own beliefs; provide reasons to justify beliefs; or self-correct when compelled by reasons. It is for these reasons that Dewey (1988) was critical of faith schools. He contrasted them to secular state schools, which, he argued, are more conducive of democracy because they provide opportunities for intercultural inquiry. Since SRE classes in NSW only segregate students for part of the school week, they appear less problematic than faith schools. However, this still means they are less educationally valuable than classes that encourage students of different faith backgrounds to engage in intercultural inquiries.⁴

Since SRE aims to indoctrinate students with the beliefs of just one religion, it can also prevent students from learning about diverse worldviews. Possessing such knowledge would better enable students to effectively interact with their sociocultural environment. World religions, as well as atheism and secularism, have impacted almost every aspect of our environment, including our languages, political systems, laws, economic systems, political geography, customs and traditions, family life, social life, ethics and morality, art, and history (Noddings 2008; Nash 2006). Nash (2006) argues that religious literacy has become increasingly important because of globalization and increasing multiculturalism, the spread of fundamentalist religions, and concerns about religious-based terrorism and the radicalization of young people:

At the beginning of the 21st century, the reality of religious pluralism hits each of us where we live. We must learn to deal with this new awareness with openness, respect, and critical understanding, or it could very well kill us. For Americans to be ignorant of militant Islamic fundamentalism, or of ultra-nationalistic Judaism, or of radical Hinduism, or of the proliferating extremist, evangelical-fundamentalist denominations of Christianity throughout the world, for example, is to court international disaster. (Nash 2006, p. 94)

Furthermore, as liberal theorists argue, children should be exposed to a range of worldviews so that they can autonomously decide which ideals of the good they wish to pursue (e.g., Feinberg 1980; Gutmann 1999; Levinson 1999; Brighouse 2006). Proponents of SRE might respond to this criticism by arguing that students are free to learn about diverse worldviews in other classes or outside of school. However, the dispositions encouraged by indoctrination may also make it difficult for students to rationally consider alternative worldviews even when they are exposed to them. If students have been inculcated with the beliefs of one religion they may not be open to properly considering competing viewpoints.

For this reason, many public submissions to the NSW parliamentary inquiry suggested that both SRE and ethics classes be replaced with a general religious education class, which would teach students about diverse worldviews without promoting any particular worldview (Parliament of NSW Legislative Council 2012, pp. 62–64).

The inquiry rejected this suggestion because GRE is already covered in other parts of the curriculum, especially social studies. Furthermore, a GRE class would not satisfy many religious parents and organizations who want children inculcated with their own faith. In fact, many theists are opposed to GRE because it can interfere with such inculcation. For example, 80% of the SRE teachers that Byrne (2010) surveyed thought that students should not learn about religions other than their own.

SRE may also impede students' access to other essential knowledge because many of the beliefs taught in SRE conflict with knowledge taught elsewhere in the school curriculum. For example, Christian SRE often teaches creationism and intelligent design as the truth, while in science students learn about evolutionary theory (Oppy 2010). In SRE, students are often taught that the earth is no more than 6000 years old (Byrne 2010), while in humanities and science students learn that there are fossils estimated to be 3.7 billion years old. Thus, SRE may cause students to reject or be confused about knowledge that can enable them to effectively interact with their social-cultural environment. Contentious beliefs, like creationism, are not as valuable because they have not been arrived at through communal inquiry and do not offer the best explanation of experience (see Oppy 2010). Many of the public submissions to the NSW parliamentary inquiry raised this concern but the committee did not address it because their focus was on assessing whether ethics should be taught in schools (Parliament of NSW Legislative Council 2012).

The Educational Value of Philosophy-based Ethics Education

A common criticism made of the NSW primary ethics classes is that they promote moral relativism (Parliament of NSW Legislative Council 2012). As Law (2006) explains, this is a common objection to the teaching of philosophy in schools. Moral relativism is the view that there are no objective moral truths. It has two distinct forms: (i) subjectivism, which maintains that that rightness and wrongness of an action (e.g., lying) is merely a matter of personal preference; and (ii) cultural relativism, which is the view that morality is determined by cultures so that what is right in one culture (e.g., arranged marriage) may be wrong in another culture. When critics claim that philosophy in schools promotes relativism, they usually seem to mean subjectivism. It is argued that by promoting moral relativism, the ethics classes fail to provide students with clear moral guidelines, leaving them confused about how they should act and more prone to immorality.

However, the claim that philosophy based ethics classes must promote moral relativism is incorrect. One of the reasons that religious conservatives falsely believe that ethics classes promote relativism is because they believe all moral truths come from religion. Since secular ethics classes do not teach religion, it is claimed that they have no moral truths to impart. This belief is reflected in the following submissions to the parliamentary inquiry:

I am opposing the [ethics] course because how can an ethics course show any absolutes. It can't because there are no absolutes, nothing is right or wrong if it is being taught by atheists. It is from the bible that we get our moral truths, from God in the Old Testament

and Jesus in the New Testament ... All our ethics come from the bible. (Parliament of NSW Legislative Council 2012, public submission no. 39, Mrs. E. M. Noble)

[The ethics course] teaches relative morals with no absolutes as humanists cannot accept that morals can be laid down by another person or higher spiritual identity. (Parliament of NSW Legislative Council 2012, public submission no. 211, Mr. W. West)

Of course, philosophers have proposed many absolute moral principles that are not derived from religion, such as Mill's principle of utility; Kant's categorical imperative; and Aristotle's mean. Furthermore, philosophers have been some of the most ardent critics of moral relativism. Some of the most famous arguments against relativism can be traced back to Socrates. As Law (2006) argues, teaching philosophy in schools may actually help combat relativism.

As Law (2006) explains, another reason many religious conservatives believe that philosophy-based ethics classes promote moral relativism is because they think teaching critical thinking entails teaching relativism. It is assumed that if students can criticize any belief and formulate and defend their own opinions then students are being told that there are no right or wrong answers. However, as Law argues, moral relativism is actually incompatible with teaching critical thinking. This is because relativism makes critical thinking redundant. If all answers are equally correct then there is no need to critically compare alternative perspectives or evaluate arguments. Nor is there any need to justify one's own opinions by providing reasons. The assumption of moral relativism would enable students to adopt whatever opinion they liked. They could not be compelled to defend it or self-correct in the face of criticism. Not surprisingly, the providers of the NSW ethics curriculum explicitly reject moral relativism: "Students are encouraged and supported to make their own judgments about whether something is right or wrong, good or bad and to explain why, using evidence and reason. All Primary Ethics classes are based on this approach *as distinct from blind appeal to authority or moral relativist approaches*" (Primary Ethics 2016b, italics added).

However, there is some basis for the concern that the ethics curriculum unintentionally promotes moral relativism. This is because they are often taught by people lacking expertise in philosophy and philosophical pedagogy, who encourage relativism through the way they implement the curriculum. In her review of the primary ethics trial in NSW, Knight found that some of the classroom facilitators expressed the view that there were "no right or wrong answers" and many thought that their role was solely to encourage students to express their opinions "in order that many different viewpoints come to be aired in the classroom or that students learn to disagree without anger" (Knight 2010, p. 13). Many facilitators failed to prompt students to justify their opinions with reasons and to critique the opinions of others. At least one of the students also got the impression that the classes promoted moral relativism: "Every week I look forward to ethics classes. It's a fun way to talk about morals. *Primary Ethics has taught me that there is no right or wrong answer* and that it's ok to change your mind" (Ethics student quoted in Parliament of NSW Legislative Council 2012, p. 16, italics added).

This is an issue to do with teacher quality, rather than philosophy-based ethics classes. It has actually been a longstanding issue within the Philosophy for Children movement. Do people teaching philosophy in schools need to know a lot of philosophy to teach it well? I believe they do need a good knowledge of philosophy. In order to foster

inquiry, facilitators need to be able to explain different philosophical positions and the arguments for and against those positions. Facilitators need this knowledge in order to prompt students to critically compare different viewpoints; critically reflect on their own opinions; and justify their opinions with reasons or self-correct. I suspect the reason so many facilitators promote relativism is because they are not able to introduce arguments and examples into the inquiry that would prompt critical thinking. This makes it difficult to rapidly introduce philosophy classes into schools on a large scale because there are simply not enough qualified people to teach them. Yet, this is exactly what has happened in NSW and it is a major concern. If philosophy-based ethics classes are often being taught in such a way as to promote moral relativism, they could be inhibiting critical thinking and, thus, the capacity for communal inquiry. This could also tarnish the reputation of philosophy and the Philosophy for Children movement.

The NSW ethics classes have also been criticized for excluding an examination of religious perspectives (see West 2011). Students are not banned from discussing religion in ethics classes. However, the classes do not aim to teach students about different religions, despite the relevance of religious beliefs to many of the ethical issues examined in class. Given that most of the students in the ethics classes are ones who have opted out of SRE, they are unlikely to introduce religious perspectives into the inquiries. This is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, as we have seen with SRE, a knowledge of diverse religious beliefs would enable students to more effectively interact with their social-cultural environment. Secondly, by excluding religious perspectives, the ethics curriculum gives the impression that religious beliefs are exempt from analysis and critique. The providers of the ethics curriculum seem to want to be respectful of SRE and of religious students and their parents by not critiquing their beliefs. This is a common concern with the teaching of religion in schools (Law 2009; Noddings 1997; 2008). However, this means that the ethics classes are treating religious beliefs in much the same way that SRE treats them – as special truth claims that are not subject to inquiry. As we have already seen, this is inconsistent with fostering the capacity for inquiry. There is no justification for exempting religious beliefs from critical thinking. These are beliefs that students are likely to encounter in their everyday lives. Students must be encouraged to critically compare different religious perspectives on ethical issues, as well as compare religious viewpoints to atheistic ones. Furthermore, as Law (2009) argues, religious students should also have to reflect critically on their own beliefs. If we are worried that students cannot criticize each other's beliefs without ridiculing or being disrespectful then this is a skill we should try to teach them. As Noddings (1997, p. 248) argues, “surely, learning how to criticize appreciatively is one of the major aims of an education that works toward intelligent living.” The philosophy for children pedagogy, upon which the ethics classes are modeled, already includes a range of strategies for fostering caring thinking and the dispositions needed to support communal inquiries into all sorts of contentious issues (see Lipman 2003; Bleazby 2013).

Many of the submissions to the NSW parliamentary inquiry also objected to the ethics classes on the grounds that they promote atheism. If this is true, it could mean that the ethics classes are also not very democratic as students from religious backgrounds would feel excluded. The NSW ethics classes are meant to be secular. They do not intend to promote atheism. The assumption seems to be that because the ethics classes do not include any religion, they are inclusive of all students regardless of their

religious backgrounds.⁵ However, from the point of view of theists, it is the very absence of religion in the ethics curriculum that renders it atheistic. As we have already seen, many religions maintain that all moral principles are drawn from religious doctrines and texts. Thus, the notion that ethics can be separated from religion is, in itself, an atheistic worldview. The fact that the ethics classes are not inclusive of people from all backgrounds is evidenced by the fact that there are many NSW students not enrolled in either ethics classes or SRE. In most cases, this is because their school does not offer SRE in their religion and their parents perceive the ethics classes to be atheistic. Thus, the introduction of the ethics classes in NSW has not solved the problem of some children being left without any meaningful activities during the time set aside for SRE. A more inclusive ethics course would actually include an examination of diverse religious perspectives on the issues examined.

Conclusion

The current arrangement regarding the teaching of SRE in NSW government schools is an unacceptable one. It privileges the rights of parents and the interests of religious organizations over the best interests of the child. It gives parents the ability to choose between two types of school curricula, when there are more valuable alternatives available. It has been argued that all forms of SRE can impede the student's ability to flourish, primarily because SRE aims to indoctrinate. In comparison to SRE, philosophy-based ethics classes do have considerable educational value, particularly because they are designed to foster the capacity for communal inquiry. However, the NSW primary ethics classes also have some problems, specifically: a tendency to promote moral relativism; a failure to critically examine religious perspectives; and the unintentional exclusion of religious students. These are problems that commonly emerge when philosophy-based ethics is taught in schools. These problems reduce the ability of the ethics classes to foster the capacity for communal inquiry and democracy.

Thus, I believe an alternative curriculum, which teaches moral reasoning and diverse worldviews, including religions and atheism, to all students would be preferable. As explained, one suggestion was that the NSW ethics and SRE courses be replaced with a comparative religions course. However, these sorts of courses are typically relativistic as they do not require students to critically compare different worldviews. There is little genuine inquiry in such courses (Noddings 1997; 2008; Law 2009). We need all students to develop the capacity for communal inquiry in relation to their study of world religions and atheism. A better alternative was suggested by Associate Professor Phillip Cam in his appearance before the parliamentary inquiry. He recommended a more general philosophy course that incorporates all the subdisciplines of philosophy: ethics, logic and critical thinking, metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics, social and political philosophy, and philosophy of religion (Parliament of NSW Legislative Council 2012). Such a course would emphasize skills and knowledge that are not the focus of other parts of the school curriculum, such as thinking skills, moral reasoning, and a critical understanding of different religions and atheism. It would also enable students to critically examine a wider range of religious beliefs (e.g., the existence of God(s), the notion of a soul), not just those relating to ethical issues. However, such a course must be

compulsory for all children. It is unacceptable that some children are enrolled in a curriculum that negates the capacity for communal inquiry, while others are enrolled in a course that fosters this capacity. Proponents of philosophy for children should not support philosophy being offered merely as an alternative to SRE. As Crawford (2012) states, doing so legitimizes the place of SRE in state schools. As SRE is incompatible with the educational ideas espoused by Philosophy for Children, proponents of Philosophy for Children should actively oppose it.⁶

Notes

- 1 For more examples see: Babie and Mylius (2012); submissions to the Parliament of NSW Legislative Council (2012).
- 2 For example, in 1971, 6.7% of Australians stated that they had “no religion” but by 2011 this had increased to 22.3%. Over the same period, the number of Australians identifying as Christian decreased from 86.2% to 61.1%.
- 3 The inquiry also recommended that a review be undertaken of both SRE and ethics classes. Although, this review was completed in March, 2016, it is yet to be released to the public.
- 4 Furthermore, some religions encourage intolerance towards certain groups of people, which would also undermine democracy. For example, several of the public submissions made to the NSW parliamentary inquiry raised concerns that some SRE encourages intolerance for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex people.
- 5 Primary Ethics (the curriculum providers) even made their curriculum available to SRE providers so that they could use it in SRE classes if they wished.
- 6 Further things to read on the topics discussed in this chapter: Brighouse (2006); Feinberg (1980); Hand (2006) and Noddings (1993).

References

- Babie, P., and Mylius, B. (2012) “The future of religious freedom in Australian schools.” *International Journal of Educational Reform* 21: 173–191.
- Bleazby, J. (2013) *Social Reconstruction Learning: Dualism, Dewey and Philosophy in Schools*. London: Routledge.
- Brighouse, H. (2006) *On Education*. London: Routledge.
- Brooks, A. (2006) *Who Really Cares?* New York: Basic Books.
- Byrne, C. (2010) “Special religious education: The good, the bad and the ugly.” Available at <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2010/11/01/3054122.htm> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (2014) “Christ our light and life.” Available at <http://www.ccdsydney.catholic.edu.au/currRes/overview.html> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Crawford, K. (2012) “Education, ethics and religion: A case study.” *Citizenship, Social and Economics Education* 11: 121–132.
- Dewey, J. (1938) *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Dewey, J. (1988) “Religion in our schools,” in *The Collected Works of John Dewey: Middle Works 1925–1953*, Vol. 4, ed. J. Boydston. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Dewey, J. (2004) *Democracy and Education*. Mineola: Dover. Original work published 1916.
- Ellerton, P. (2010) “Theology is not philosophy,” in W. Bonett (ed.) *The Australian Book of Atheism*. Melbourne: Scribe, pp. 125–138.

- Feinberg, J. (1980) "The child's right to an open future," in W. Aiken and H. LaFollette (eds.) *Whose Child? Rights, Parental Authority, and State Power*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 124–153.
- Freire, P. (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Gutmann, A. (1999) *Democratic Education*, rev. edn. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hand, M. (2003) "A philosophical objection to faith schools." *Theory and Research in Education* 1: 89–99.
- Hand, M. (2006) *Is Religious Education Possible? A Philosophical Investigation*. London: Continuum.
- Knight, S. (2010) *NSW ethics course trial final report*. Sydney: NSW Department of Education and Training.
- Law, S. (2006) *The War for Children's Minds*. London: Routledge.
- Law, S. (2009) "Religion and philosophy in schools," in M. Hand and C. Winstanley (eds.) *Philosophy in Schools*. London: Continuum, pp. 41–57.
- Levinson, M. (1999) *The Demands of Liberal Education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lipman, M. (2003) *Thinking in Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Maitzen, S. (2007) "Sceptical theism and God's commands." *Sophia* 46: 235–42.
- Nash, R. (2006) "A letter to secondary teachers: teaching about religious pluralism in the public schools," in N. Noddings (ed.) *Educating Citizens for Global Awareness*. New York: Teachers College Press, pp. 93–106.
- Neil, A. (1962) *Summerhill*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Noddings, N. (1993) *Educating for Intelligent Belief or Unbelief*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Noddings, N. (1997) "Dialogue between believers and unbelievers." *Religious Education: The Official Journal of the Religious Education Association* 92: 244–253.
- Noddings, N. (2008) "The new outspoken atheism and education." *Harvard Educational Review* 78: 369–430.
- Oppy, G. (2010) "Evolution vs creationism in Australian schools," in W. Bonett (ed.) *The Australian Book of Atheism*. Melbourne: Scribe, pp. 139–153.
- Parliament of NSW Legislative Council (2012) "Education amendment (ethics classes) repeal bill 2011." Available at <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=1769> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Parliament of NSW Legislative Council (2015) "1990 Education Act, No 8." Available at <http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/act/1990/8> (accessed 18 September 2018).
- Plato (1998) *The Republic*, trans. R. Waterfield. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Primary Ethics (2015) "Our curriculum." Available at <https://primaryethics.com.au/about-ethics-classes/our-curriculum/> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Primary Ethics (2016a) "Our history." Available at <https://primaryethics.com.au/about/our-history/> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Primary Ethics (2016b) "About our classes." Available at <https://primaryethics.com.au/about-ethics-classes/> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Shermer, M. (2006) "Bowling for God." *Scientific American* 295/6: 44.
- Snook, I. (1972) *Indoctrination and Education*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- United Nations (1948) *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Available at http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf (accessed 20 September 2018).
- West, C. (2011) "The confluence of education and children's spirituality in New South Wales." *Journal of Student Engagement: Education Matters*, 1: 11–20.

Happiness

GREGORY S. PAUL

Over human history it has commonly and often ardently been believed that civilizations that are not managed in accord with the instructions of at least one supernatural and super-moral deity are unable to achieve societal success. The premise is that in the absence of the guidance of a magically wise authority flawed mortals are unable to generate the moral and practical wherewithal to manage their affairs. A result of this godly-religion socioeconomic hypothesis has been a strong prejudice against ungodly atheism. But as customary as it has been, the opinion in favor of theism has never been substantiated. It was not possible to scientifically test the validity of the godly-religion socioeconomic hypothesis until the late 1900s; previously there were no strongly atheistic democracies, so their performance could be compared to that of theistic nations. It has become possible to conduct the test. The last century saw an unprecedented and rapid expansion of atheism in western and Asian democracies, and the growth of irreligion continues and may be accelerating in the new millennium. This has led to intense controversy – the modern culture war – in which many theists, especially but not exclusively conservative believers, retain the opinion that religion remains crucial to societal success. Other theists and many atheists think that both theism and atheism can generate positive results. Meanwhile a growing body of research is finding that only the most atheistic democracies have achieved the highest level of success, that theistic societies are precluded from doing so, and why this is true. In addition, theism is by far the primary source of war-level violence in the modern world.

The Relationship Between Socioeconomic Eufunction and Dysfunction with Popular Atheism and Theism

The following discussion divides into two parts: a brief consideration of how things stand at the level of individuals, and a more extensive discussion of how things stand at the level of societies.

The Personal Situation

A number of studies have suggested that higher levels of religiosity within populations is associated with superior personal outcomes (Powell, Shahabi, and Thoresen 2003; Norris and Inglehart 2004; Brooks 2006; Norenzayan and Shariff 2008; Inzlicht et al. 2009), leading to an apparent sociological paradox (Shermer 2006; Bloom 2008). But the paradox may not be real, Galen and Kloet's (2011) statistical reanalysis indicates that similarly strong atheists and theists share similar levels of quality of life – it is theistic fence-sitters that appear to be doing less well – and other studies cast doubt on the hypothesis that the less religious are less well off (Powell et al. 2003); Blumenthal et al. 2007; Keister 2008; Paul 2008; Chida, Steptoe, and Powell 2009; Putnam and Campbell 2010); this is compatible with the tendency of religiosity to decline with increasing financial and educational status (Gallup 2006). In any case, the procedure of comparing outcomes among individual persons within a given society is limited because differing societal circumstances may make it easier for atheists to thrive in some societies, and theists in others such as the US in which atheists are often discriminated against (Edgell, Gerteis, and Hartmann 2006; Zuckerman 2009; Putman and Campbell 2010; Gervais, Shariff, and Norenzayan 2011; Paul and Zuckerman 2011; Cragun et al. 2012; Wallace, Bradley, and Wright 2014). More useful results are obtained by comparing societies of varying religiosity, both over time and laterally, with the latter at a regional or even better the national level.

The Societal Situation

Some cross-national correlative studies have suggested a theistic advantage in narrow areas (Malloch 2003; Barro & McCleary 2003; Barro 2004), but these are so limited in scope that they are potentially misleading. No study statistically comparing dozens of socioeconomic factors demonstrating a positive relationship between those indicators and high levels of popular piety in a large set of nations has appeared over the decades. The most suitable nations for cross-national comparisons are First World countries (Paul 2009a; 2014; Wilkinson & Pickett 2009; Anderson and Squires 2010; Squires 2011) they are the most successful societies yet seen, they minimize apples and orange comparisons in which differing levels of development obscure the impact of differing religiosity, and data is most abundant and highest in quality.

The most comprehensive comparison to date of socioeconomic conditions in the most prosperous dozen and a half democracies is the Successful Societies Scale (SSS; Paul 2009a; 2010a; 2012, which includes an extended justification of the countries sampled, the initial factors used and data tables and plots not included in this chapter which contains a further expanded SSS in Figure 27.1, and the method for scoring the results). The original SSS included two dozen indicators covering lethal crime, corruption and punishment, mortality, and physical and mental health including adverse and positive consequences of sexual activity plus drug use, marriage and divorce, educational achievement, and an array of economic and financial measures. These indicators have been correlated with a broad measure of a nations level of non/religiosity, a/theism and non/support of evolutionary science, the Popular Religiosity Versus Secularism Scale (PRVSS as detailed in Paul 2009a).

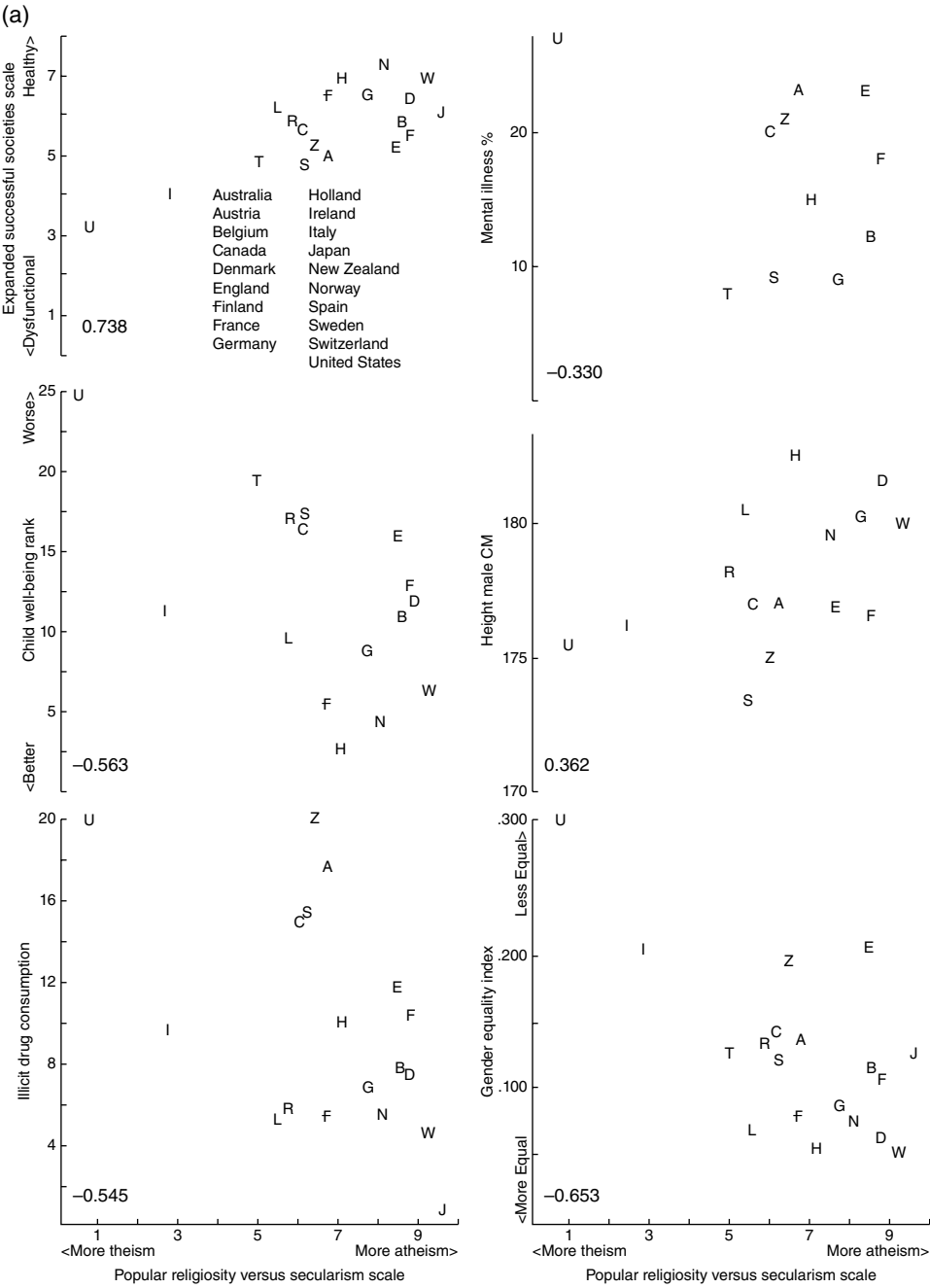


Figure 27.1 (a) Correlations between levels of popular religiosity and secularism against socioeconomic measures in First World nations.

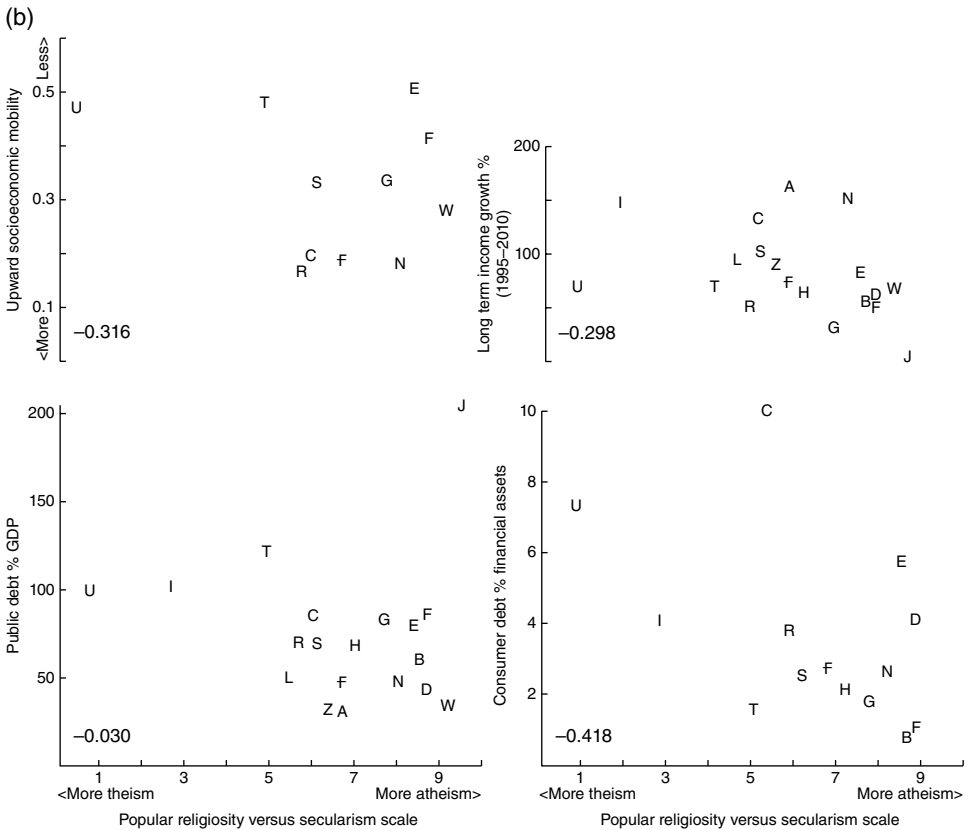


Figure 27.1 (b) Correlations between levels of popular religiosity and secularism against socioeconomic measures in First World nations.

Homicide, the gravest crime and the only one that is readily comparable between nations, remains abnormally high in the United States, which is a First World outlier. Lethal violence is especially prevalent in urban America to a degree not seen elsewhere in the developed world. With one in five hundred deaths attributable to murder, the lowest homicides rates seen in the secular democracies may represent the minimal levels achievable in human societies. Zuckerman (2008) notes that the modest crime rates extant in some secular democracies are achieved with minimal police presence. Incarceration has soared in the United States to the degree that no other country, even China and India, have more prisoners in absolute terms, and America is proportionally about a dozen times higher than the western norm. The US prisoner population is strongly skewed towards minorities, to the degree that the male population of inner cities has been seriously impacted.

Although all First World countries have low juvenile mortality compared to historical norms, an almost twofold variation remains with lower rates correlating progressively and very strongly with greater popular atheism, the lowest losses being in the most secular nations sampled, while they are the highest in the United States. America has the shortest life spans within the group, and performs even worse in time

lived in good health (Muenning and Glied 2010). The situation for the United States is graver than the snapshot indicates, because the nation has been losing ground regarding life expectancy, partly because life spans are actually decreasing in regions of the country and among working-class whites (Ezzati et al. 2008; Woolf 2013; Arias 2016) – no other advanced nation is experiencing regional reductions. The correlation between lower theism and longer life span is significant but not tight. Americans used to be exceptionally tall, but have lost substantial ground in respect to other prosperous democracies until they are below the secular maximum (Figure 27.1), as other indicators of American's health levels also slipped relative to the other countries (Komlos and Lauderdale 2007; also see Kawachi and Kennedy 2002; Sapolsky 2005; Winkleby, Cubbin, and Ahn 2006; Paul 2008; Reid 2009; Wilkinson and Pickett 2009; Muenning & Glied 2010; Squires 2011; Murray et al. 2013). Child well-being is worse in the United States and tends to improve with more atheosecularism (Figure 27.1). A similar pattern applies to illicit drug use, with the exceptionally high use of opiates contributing to declining life spans among American working-class whites (Figure 27.1; Degenhardt et al. 2008; Arias 2016), and the United States ranks poorly in mental illness (Bijl et al. 2003; Friedli 2009), and education performance (United Nations 2008).

Regarding suicide, alcohol consumption, marriages, fertility, and employment, correlations with a/theism do not exist, and/or the United States performs typically or well. Life satisfaction, which is widely considered a better measure of the state of the mood of persons, shows little variation in the sampled nations, and the United States is average in this feature, but the highest levels are observed in the most atheistic democracies, including Denmark which is often labeled the happiest nation (United Nations 2016). Divorce is very, but not uniquely, high in the United States but tends to be less common along with more atheism, cohabitation being more prevalent with seculars. The common theo-conservative view that ungodly Western countries have poor fertility is complicated, atheistic France has high birth rates and very low rates are present in the most strongly Catholic European countries. More gender equality correlates well with less theism, with the United States performing the poorest among advanced nations (Figure 27.1; United Nations 2009). The United States used to score typically in corruption, but revelations of massive financial manipulations behind the Great Recession have lowered its ranking to near the bottom for Western nations (Transparency International 2010), and the nation is mediocre when it comes to trust (Uslaner 2002). Significant to strong correlations between more atheism and better conditions do exist regarding abortion, STD infections, and teen pregnancy outside of marriage, theo-conservatives denounce, and the United States performs poorly in these factors, often being the worst off, sometimes by very large degrees, although the gap has been closing since the turn of the century as the United States rapidly secularizes.

In economics and related matters correlations between per capita income and a/theism are weak, although the United States does very well in this respect, as well as in innovation. Correlations between home ownership, income growth (Figure 27.1) and employment with a/theism are faint; the United States is surprisingly not exceptional in the first, is below average in the second, contrary to popular impression, and has lost ground in the latter. America has unusually but not uniquely high personal and national debt loads (Figure 27.1). More atheism equates with fewer work hours that increase personal and family time, less poverty, less income disparity, and more

upward social mobility (Figure 27.1). European economic problems since the crash have been needlessly exaggerated by focusing on Second World and marginal First World European Union members while downplaying the greater resilience of the leading advanced democracies. In recent years even the libertarian-leaning World Economic Forum has downgraded the United States from its longstanding first place status in global economic competitiveness, ranking a number of progressive secular democracies as more competitive (WEF 2013).

With 0 the lowest possible cumulative expanded SSS score and 10 the highest, the observed variation is from a little over 3 to just over 7, with the United States performing the worst because it scores so poorly in too many regards, often being a grim outlier in dysfunction. The correlation between the SSS and a/theism as measured by the PRVSS is very strong, with the highest-scoring countries being the most atheistic and pro-evolution (Figures. 27.1 and 27.2; Paul 2009a). Higher levels of absolute belief in a god and religious practices also correlate closely with inferior socioeconomics, while more atheism and acceptance of evolution have strong positive relationships with better conditions (Paul 2009a; 2014).

All other large-scale cross-national comparisons of socioeconomics and religiosity, some including countries of widely differing levels of development, also found that greater atheism was statistically related to superior conditions (Verweij, Ester, and Nauta 1997; Gill and Lundsgaarde 2004; Norris and Inglehart 2004; Jensen 2006; Zuckerman 2008; Rees 2009; Barber 2011). A fresh comparison of popular non/religiosity using the UN's Inequality Adjusted Human Development Index confirms loose but significant relationships between more atheosecularism and acceptance of evolutionary science and superior conditions in a wide variety of First to Third World nations (Figure 27.3), indicating that the atheosecular advantage is not limited to First World countries. Atheistic communist countries that have adopted substantial capitalism have performed well by developing world standards; highly atheistic China is doing markedly better than the profoundly religious Indian democracy, for example. In Russia the alliance between a resurgent Orthodox church and the new autocracy has been associated with weak socioeconomic performance. Cross-national comparisons that do not examine the a/theism issue tend to produce similar rankings of countries, with the United States not scoring particularly well in within the First World cohort, and in some regards being outperformed by higher-tier Second World countries (such as Wilkinson and Picket 2009). Regarding variations within theism, more conservative theism as measured by bible literalism is strongly related to less optimal conditions in First World countries (Figure 27.2). Interestingly and significantly, moderate-progressive theism is tied to poorer performance to a similar degree (Figure 27.2), contrary to the common conceit that only hard-right religion is associated with societal dysfunction.

Although the American Way has its strengths, godly American Exceptionalism has proven exceptional in a dysfunctional manner, to such an extent that of all the First World countries the United States resembles a Second World nation socioeconomically and religiously. America is performing so poorly in many regards despite its immense wealth that it should be a matter of grave national concern – all the more so because the country was so far ahead of the rest of the West in the wake of World War II – rather than of the overglorification of the Judeo-Christian American Way by its promoters. Recent economic problems in Europe are not universal with some of the economies

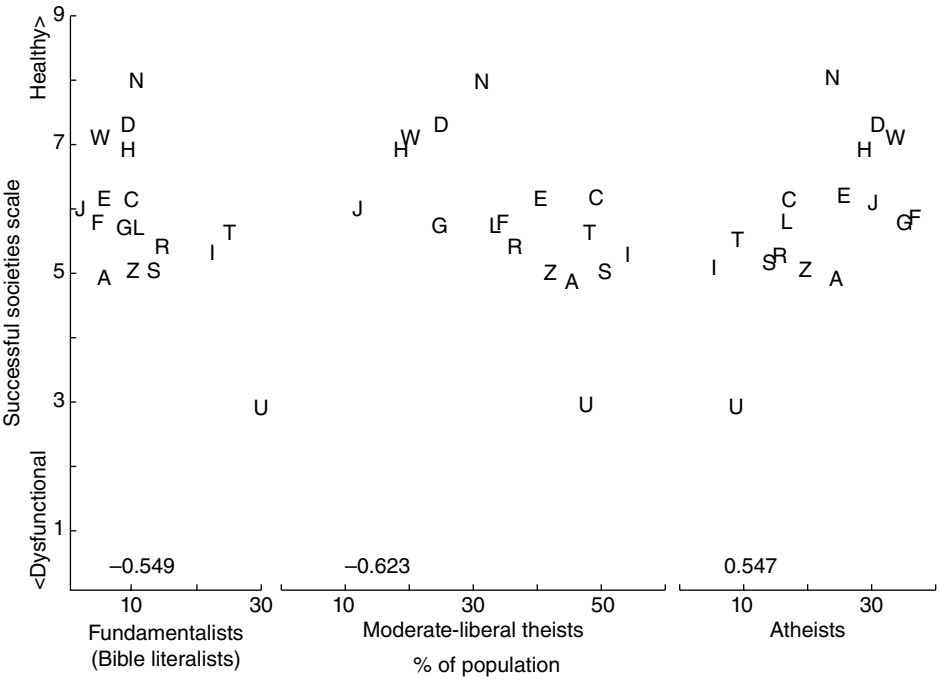


Figure 27.2 Correlations between the Successful Society Scale (Paul 2009a) and measures of fundamentalism, moderate-liberal theism, and atheism in First World nations (ISSP 2001).

performing well, the economic union including a dysfunctional mix of First and Second World entities, while the euro constrains the economic flexibility of ill-performing currency members, and hardline austerity policies appear to have done more harm than good.

The relationship between a/theism and socioeconomic performance has not been as comprehensively examined between regions within the United States, but results to date do not show a positive correlation between more theism and better socioeconomic conditions (Aral and Holmes 1996; Doyle 2000; 2002; Beeghley 2003; Paul 2005; Barna 2004; Ezzati 2008; Zuckerman 2008; Edelman 2009; Delamontagne 2010; Woolf 2013; Park, Tom, and Andercheck 2014). A new comparison of levels of non/religion and socioeconomics among the states does find that less popular piety and creationism significantly correlate with better circumstances (Figure 27.4), with the theo-conservative and creationist southeast exhibiting higher levels of social dysfunction, including lethal crime and adverse consequences of sexual activity, and poorer economic circumstances, than more atheistic and pro-evolution regions such as the northeast. Decreases in life span and degradation of health including rising obesity are also concentrated in the Bible Belt. Contrary to perpetual predictions that increasing irreligion would degrade the state of the nation, a number of societal conditions within the United States have tended to improve as the country has become more atheistic over the last four decades (Figure 27.5). Note that the rise on global irreligion closely parallels the rise of the middle class, these mass conversion driven trends contradict forecasts based

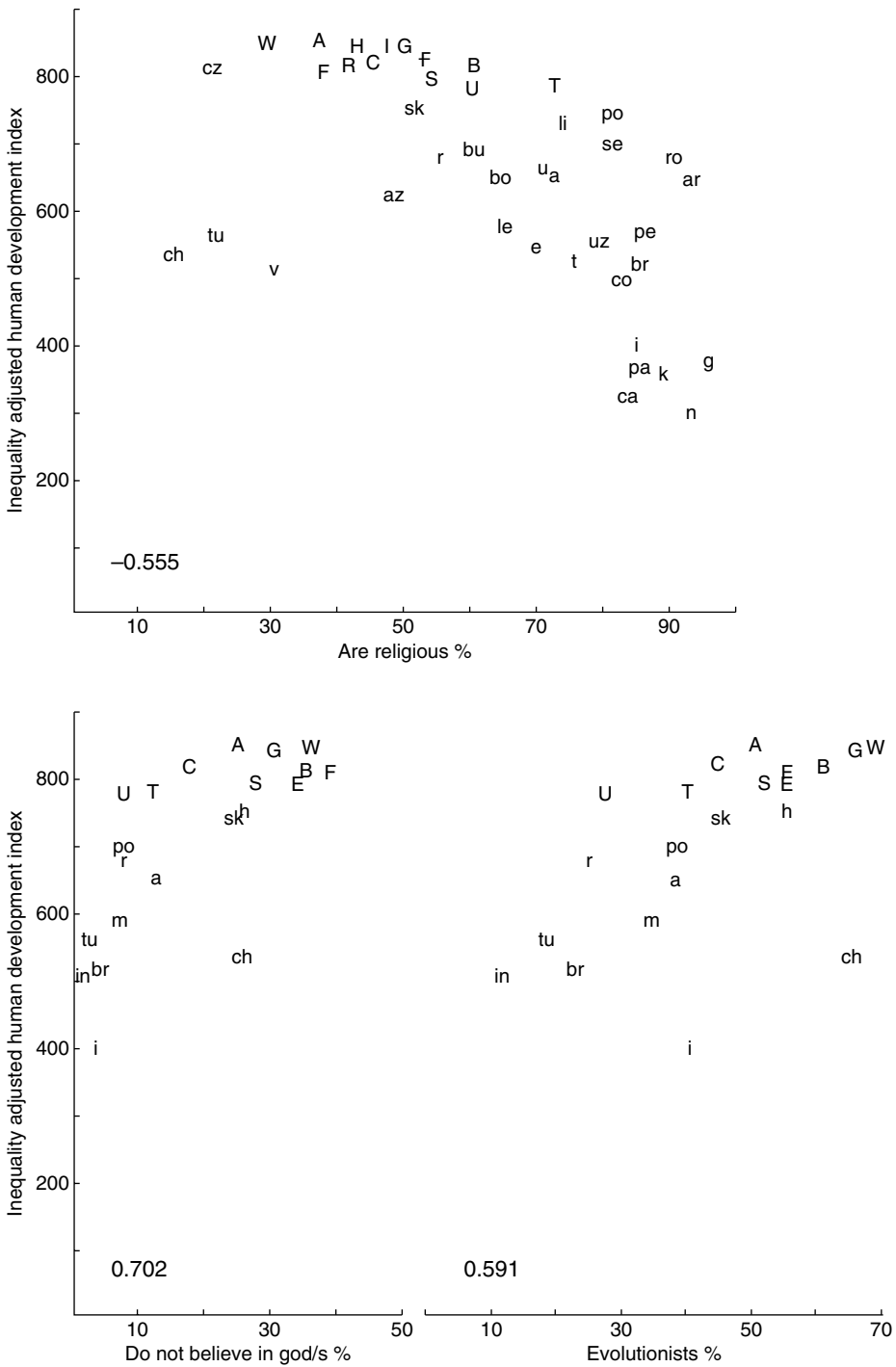


Figure 27.3 Correlations between the UN's cumulative gross measure of socioeconomic conditions in First, Second, and Third World nations against measures of religiosity, atheism and support of evolutionary science. Source: RedC (2011); Ipsos (2011).

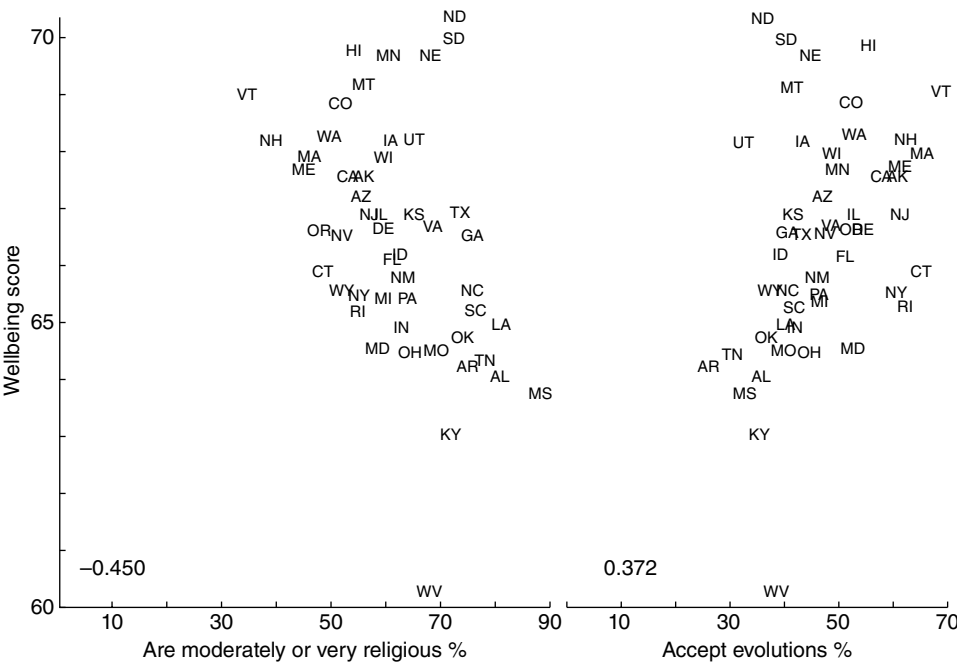


Figure 27.4 Correlations between Gallup's cumulative gross measure of socioeconomic conditions in the states against measures of religiosity and support of evolutionary science. The high scores of strongly theistic, low population NE, ND, SD have been due to their economies being inflated by fossil fuel exports. Source: Coyne (2013); Gallup (2014).

on legacy driven demographics (such as Pew 2015b) that religion on the planet will regain ground in coming decades.

Also of increasingly critical importance on an international basis is mass lethal physical and sexual violence in the form of terrorism and war. With the Cold War defunct, strife induced by atheistic violence is no longer a major world factor (see Table 27.1), communist rebellions being limited to a few locales such as parts of India. The vast majority of current terrorism is conducted by Muslims, including the establishment of an extreme rape culture in the form of the Islamic State. In suicide terrorism the desire of a significant, psychologically depressed portion of any given society to end their lives appears to be exploited by hardline leaders who make the act into an act of godly glory rather than a shameful tragedy.

The Pew Forum (2014a) finds that social hostilities involving religion are rising and have achieved a new high of one-third of the nearly 200 extant countries (Table 27.2). The great proportion of these troubles in five dozen countries are religious vs. religious, with some religious violence perpetrated against secular and atheist victims.

The modern casualty contest between theism and atheism is far from being close, theism having contributed to up to seventy times as many war deaths as has atheism over the last quarter-century. With the theo-strife lead growing fast – it certainly is not

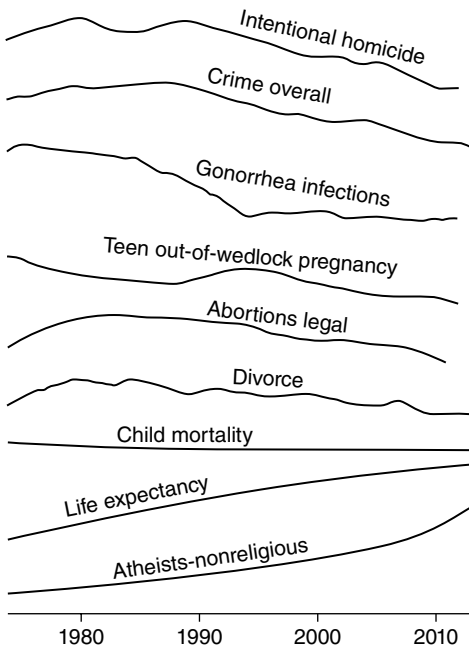


Figure 27.5 Major socioeconomic trends in the United States during the rise in atheism and irreligiosity since the 1970s.

Table 27.1 Approximate casualties attributable to conflicts driven by an atheoleftist movement since the end of the Cold War.

Country	Casualties
Peru	70 000
Nepal	18 000
India	10 000
Philippines	1000
Total	~100,000

dropping dramatically and may be getting worse – *theism as it retreats but fights back is clearly the much greater danger than is peacefully advancing atheist opinion in the new century*. Much international terror is Islamic. In the Middle East, there is civil war, largely, but by no means entirely, Sunni versus Shia. There is a case that, in the most explicitly theistic struggles, extremists have been the primary initiators; the establishment of a quasi-state by ISIS is the most egregious example. But there have been even more casualties in the west-central African zone, where Christian-animists have played a major role in the mayhem and sociopathy.” In these theo-patriarchal conflicts the death tolls tell only part of the tale – violence and terror against women including assault and chronic rape

Table 27.2 Thousands of casualties attributable to recent and ongoing conflicts involving at least a significant religious component.

Conflict	Casualties (000 s)
Balkans (Orthodox vs. Catholic & Muslim)	250
Chechnya (Muslim vs. Orthodox)	200
Tajikistan (extremist vs. moderate Muslims)	50
Israel v Palestinians (Jew vs. Muslim)	3.5
India v Pakistan (Hindu vs. Muslim)	60
Algeria (extremist vs. moderate Muslim)	150
Somalia (extremist vs. moderate Muslim)	550
Afghanistan (Taliban vs. moderate Muslim)	400
Islamic terrorism	60
Post 9/11-Afghanistan (extremist Sunni vs. Christians and seculars)	40
Iraq (initiated by conservative Christian Americans, later Sunni vs. Shiite)	250
Pakistan (Taliban vs. moderate Sunnis)	40
Yemen (Shiite vs. Sunni)	5
Syria (Alawite vs. Sunni)	400
Thailand (Buddhists vs. Muslims)	4
Congo, Zaire, Uganda, Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Central, African Republic (extremist Christians v extremist Muslims vs. animists & shamanists)	5000
	7500

is a matter of course, and children are widely exploited as warriors. Also devastated is wildlife and the environment. Reagan’s prediction that the end of the godless Soviet empire would remove the main source of evil in the world has proven deeply naïve, it being theists who are the main and rising source of modern strife and dysfunction.

The results leave no doubt that profound variations in socioeconomics as well as the popularity of a/theism exist, and that there are significant and therefore potentially explanatory correlations between the factors. It is also well documented that the atheistic democracies are significantly and regularly outperforming the more theistic ones, as well as all Second and Third World countries where theism is popular. If atheo-democracies were merely doing as well as theo-democracies then the godly-religion socioeconomic hypothesis would be refuted. That the first are doing so much better not only means that all versions of that hypothesis are firmly overturned, but indicates that the much less popular secular-democratic socioeconomic hypothesis is valid for reasons to be elucidated.

Why Atheism is a Societal Success Story

The following discussion of reasons for the success of contemporary secular democracies divides into two parts: a consideration of the advantages that atheism affords, and then a consideration of the disadvantages that theism brings in tow.

The Atheistic Advantage

We turn, first, to explaining the exceptional success of the most atheistic democracies versus the disappointing performance of the more pious United States by determining whether and how causal factors are operating. The first question is whether extraneous factors may be primarily responsible for the divergence in socioeconomic achievement. America's often acclaimed frontier heritage is not a critical dynamic because Canada and Australia also have had expansive frontiers. Nor can the promulgation of adverse societal values and violence by the media explain the differing outcomes since the First World media is strongly Americanized (Tomlinson 1991). Muenning and Glied (2010) found that higher rates of homicide, accidents, obesity, and smoking do not adequately account for the inferior health outcomes of Americans, if anything the relatively poor health of Americans is all the more perturbing because the nation spends so much more per capita on health care (Kawachi and Kennedy 2002; Schoen et al. 2005; Anderson et al. 2006; Banks et al. 2006; Paul 2009c; Reid 2009; Muenning and Glied 2010). Population diversity as measured by ethnic/racial diversity and immigration is not uniquely high in the United States vis-à-vis a number of other prosperous democracies, and the correlations with socioeconomics and non-religiosity are too weak to be explanatory (Paul 2009a).

That less income disparity, poverty, middle-class income stagnation and socioeconomic immobility – which correlate with one another (Wilkinson & Pickett 2009; Berg & Ostry 2011; Corak 2013) – correlate positively with both less societal dysfunction and more atheism means that high levels of theism exist only when high levels of socioeconomic insecurity are extant, indicating that the two are interdependent in some manner. A growing body of research is supporting the uncertainty hypothesis (Malinowski 1954), or more specifically the socioeconomic security atheization hypothesis, that proposes that the insecurity that stems from a seriously defective environment is necessary for theism to be highly popular on empirical and theoretical grounds (Verweij et al. 1997; Gill and Lundsgaarde 2004; Norris and Inglehart 2004; Zuckerman 2008; Paul 2009a; 2010a; 2012; 2014); Rees 2009; Barber 2011), so higher levels of physical and especially financial security among the majority of the population tend to be associated with higher levels of atheism on both an individual and national basis (Pew Forum 2002; Norris and Inglehart 2004; Gallup 2006; RedC 2012).

Better performance on the SSS and other indicators of superior social function correlate positively with indicators of progressive socioeconomic policies – lower income disparity, higher taxes, higher non-military government spending, greater unionization, more gender equality, more parental cohabitation. Poorer performance correlates with indicators of conservolibertarianism – higher income disparity, lower taxes especially on the wealthy and less government social spending, deunionization, greater patriarchy, more marriage and more private charitable giving. The empirical results of the First World socioeconomic experiment that has been running since the last global war are showing that hybrid economies produce superior overall national circumstances compared to the more laissez-faire capitalism and private charity in place in the United States (Kawachi and Kennedy 2002; Marmot 2004; Reid 2004; 2009; Sapolsky 2005; Harris 2006; 2010; Zuckerman 2008; Wilkinson and Pickett 2009;

Delamontagne 2010; Geoghegan 2010; Berg & Ostry 2011; Noah 2012; Stiglitz 2012; Corak 2013; Tyler 2013). The first are stakeholder systems that do a better job of addressing the long-term needs of the overall population by using the right amount of socialist policies – too much is as adverse as too little – to modulate the Darwinian capital that while producing much but by no means all of technoindustrial prosperity is primed to capture and consume a dysfunctional proportion of the national wealth.

Most importantly regarding this analysis, the risk that a given person or family will suffer financial ruin and physical endangerment is minimized only in the context of disciplined progressive government policies. With a high benefit/cost ratio, universal health coverage ensures any given citizen that they and their relations will receive effective modern medical care regardless of their personal finances, while protecting the latter. Worker's paid leisure and family care time are ensured, and child care support is extensive. Financial security is further sheltered by some blend of extensive job security and/or support during periods of unemployment, as well as unionization. Upward mobility is boosted by aid to the lower-classed tax-based education. Bans on corporal punishment, anti-bullying policies, serious gun control, and rehabilitative incarceration on a modest scale are in place. Government support of families reduces the need for the long troubled institution of marriage. As a result of the high level of earthly comfort and security a large portion or majority of the population no longer has sufficient interest in the seeking the aid and protection of supernatural deities in their daily lives to continue to worship or believe in them. The reduction in interest in religion reduces attendance at religious ceremonies, further reducing the influence of the religious industry upon individuals, resulting in additional decreases in religious activity and opinion. Atheo-progressive nations are the true opportunity societies in both upward socioeconomic mobility and the freedom to not be pressured to worship speculative gods. The partial replacement of faith-based charitable institutions with government agencies further reduces the outreach of religious organizations into the general public.

The United States is the most religiously abnormal prosperous nation because it is the most socioeconomically abnormal, the nation standing as the exemplar of the socioeconomic insecurity theozation hypothesis that predicts that insecure life circumstances allow and tend to promote religiosity. Provided with comparatively low levels of government support and protection in favor of less restrained "wild west" libertarian capitalism that favors the short-term gains of shareholders over stakeholders, members of the middle class are at serious risk of financial and personal ruin if they lose their job or private health insurance; around a million Americans go bankrupt in a year,² about half due in part to often overwhelming medical bills (Himmelstein et al. 2009). Non-universal health coverage has posed a personal financial burden because it costs about twice as much per person without significant benefit, and the non-transportability of job-based insurance hinders entrepreneurial self-employment. The need to acquire wealth as a protective buffer encourages an intense competitive race to the top, made worse by libertarian economics that have made the nation's economy the most efficient at transferring large funds from the middle class to the small wealthy elite through a number of avaricious financial "rent seeking" (Stiglitz 2012) and other devices to designed to concentrate wealth in the top 1% including: the corporate effort to get as many in the middle and bottom in debt results in their paying massive interest to the

top; the lower wages and benefits including retirement funds associated with deunionization reduces costs for capital while increasing worker debt and interest loads; poorly regulated high finance regularly devolves into legal but unsustainable pyramid schemes that defraud middle-class investors of enormous sums before the plays collapse; and lowering taxes on all classes serves the upper tier most of all by increasing the amount of lower- and middle-level money that can be shifted up the class scale, and then allowing the upper class to keep more of their gains. The result of this Darwinian economy has been growing income inequality, income stagnation for most, and an exceptionally rigid class society that leaves a large cohort mired in poverty while stagnating the financial growth of the middle class despite major gains in worker productivity, forcing a large portion into debt, reducing or eliminating medical and retirement security, and raising chronic anxiety levels. Even the American top 1% is under persistent stress because of the intensity of their intra-competition for conspicuous status, and the fear of conspicuous and ruinous failure. Limitations on guns are weak, and incarceration driven in part by privatized prisons looking for more “customers” is retributive and abusive on a mass scale that discriminates against minorities, especially urban ones (Dyer 2000; Alexander 2012). Not surprisingly, levels of societal pathology including lethal crime are high. A body of researchers are concluding that the existence of high income disparity and poverty directly contributes to the physical and mental illness of citizens, impaired cognitive functioning, via psychological mechanisms, partly due to the stress that ensues from the intense competitive race, partly from feelings of inferiority and failure (Kawachi & Kennedy 2002; Marmot 2004; Sapolsky 2005; Winkleby et al. (2006); Wilkinson & Pickett 2009; Mani et al. 2013). Research further suggests that high income disparity and chronic societal stress may adversely alter gene expression both in individuals, and in a manner that can be inherited (Borghol et al. 2012; Hackett et al. 2013), such epigenetic effects may help explain high rates of psychological dysfunction in Americans.

The majority of Americans are left feeling sufficiently economically and physically insecure that they find it helpful to request the assistance of a supernatural creator, boosting levels of religious opinion and participation. The ultimate expression of this psychosociological phenomenon is the large minority who adhere to the evangelical Prosperity Christianity and Rapture cultures (which are highly Pentecostal), whose bible-based worldview favors belief in the Genesis creation story, as well as Mormonism which is not inherently young earth creationist. Because socioeconomic insecurity is most adverse in the economically libertarian southeast, it is the most pious.

The insecurities and dysfunctions of underdeveloped nations and societies are well suited for producing the environment that pushes people to petition supernatural beings. That the rise of the global middle class is being closely paralleled by a rise in non-supernaturalism supports the pattern (Figure 27.6). But it is as interesting as it is important that the relatively low religiosity present in some underdeveloped societies from preindustrial – such as the hunter-gatherer Hadza (Marlow 2010; Paul 2010b) of eastern Africa, and the Chinese civilization (Yang 1970) that has never been strongly religious – to modern (such as the increasing non-religiosity of the American white working class while its socioeconomic circumstances degrade (Pew Forum 2015a); and the continuing loss of Irish theo-belief (RedC 2012) along with the general failure of religion to regain ground in Western Europe during the Great Recession and as

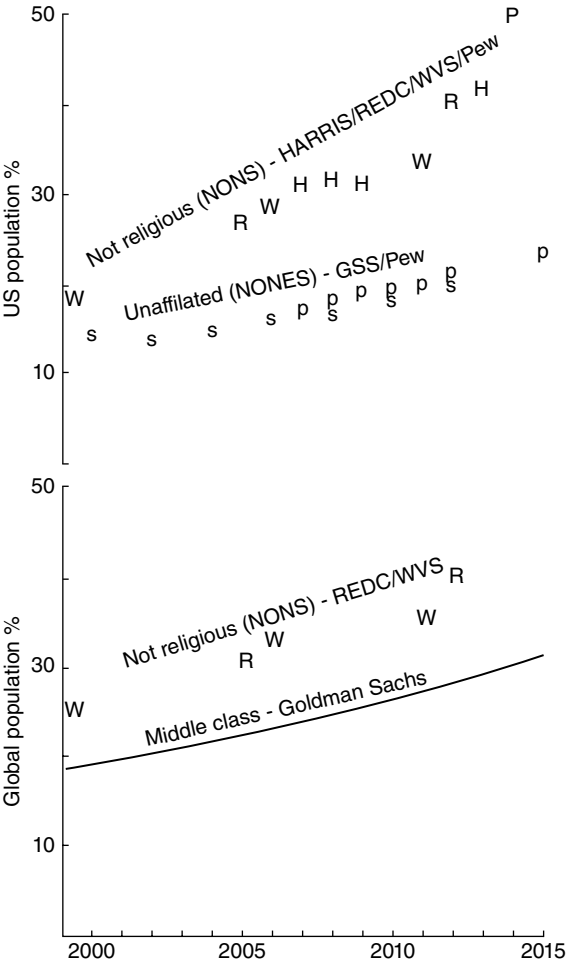


Figure 27.6 The rapid expansion of non-theism at the expense of religion in the United States and the globe since the turn of the century. Note that in the US plot the non-religious greatly outnumber the more commonly cited unaffiliated, and the highest value for non-religious Americans is a Pew Forum (2014b, p. 13) calculation markedly above the self-reporting of being nonreligious, so the detheism of the United States, although long delayed compared to other Western nations, is now more dramatic than usually realized.

increasingly populist nationalists promote Christian mores) establishes that while *malfunctional socioeconomics are necessary for, they do not necessarily result in, high levels of supernaturalistic religion* (Paul 2010b; 2012; 2014; contra Paul 2009a). Even more important is that because the achievement of the highest socioeconomic success in history is always associated with progressive socioeconomics and a strong elevation of atheism at the expense of all forms of theism – the perceived need to rely on gods being sharply reduced – it is correspondingly *impossible for highly successful societies to be either financially libertarian or highly theistic, including progressively theistic* (Paul 2014). And because atheism enjoys the parallel advantages of being the opinion that automatically

greatly expands when the socioeconomic environment is sufficiently benign, it is the only opinion that can thrive in successful societies, so *only progressive atheistic democratic societies have been and can be highly successful*. The socioeconomic security atheization hypothesis, as well as the parallel secular-democratic socioeconomic hypothesis, is correspondingly strongly supported (in agreement with Paul 2005; 2009a; 2010b; Zuckerman 2008; 2009, as well as the results of Verweij et al. 1997; Gill and Lundsgaarde 2004; Norris and Inglehart 2004; Zuckerman 2008; Rees 2009; Ruiter and Tubergen 2009; Barber 2011).

Improved socioeconomic conditions are probably the most important item causing modern mass atheosecularization, but it is unlikely to be the sole cause. Other probable causal forces include differing cultural heritages and mores, scientific refutation of supernaturalistic forces and creation stories, increasing knowledge of the unethical aspects of theistic doctrines and scriptures, religious scandals, social digital technologies that are causing people to disassociate from social organizations including religious, and very importantly the massive and highly successful corporate effort to convert citizens from frugal pious churchgoers to free spending, materialistic consumers (Paul 2009a; 2010a; 2014). The last has probably been a key element in driving accelerating American secularization despite the nation's poor socioeconomics compared to other developed countries. Aversion to America's large religious right is not an empirical cause of the nation's loss of faith (*contra* Putman and Campbell 2010) for the obvious reason that the United States combines the highest level of theism and the largest theism-right in the Western world – that makes sense in that the more conservative believers there are in the nation the more religious the country will be.

The Theistic Disadvantage

The secular-democratic socioeconomic hypothesis is clearly operative regarding how running societies well automatically promotes atheism. Does the hypothesis extend to theism directly hindering proper management of societies well, and if so what kind/s of theism are most non-functional?

The basic idea that gods are good for societies is null if the core belief that God is good is wrong. Paul (2008) (2009b) argues strongly that the deaths of so many preborn and children – the latter largely from torturous diseases that any designing gods either created or choose to not properly protect children from – entirely precludes the existence of a moral – let alone perfect – prolife creator God who wants humans to enjoy the free will that supposedly justifies human and animal suffering.”

The vast death of immature humans does not merely remove the possibility that the creator of this ill-tuned, child-unfriendly universe can provide the moral foundations for societies to be as successful as is possible. It is actively detrimental because worshipping a deity that is responsible for the mass homicide of children in exchange for expected benefits is intrinsically morally dysfunctional to the degree it risks elevating societal dysfunction – banning murder based on the demands of a being that has created a planet so murderous that it has liquidated about 50 billion children is obviously the kind of psychosociologically conflicted do-as-I-say-not-as-I-do instruction that leads to moral hazards such as murdering humans. This danger is applicable to theism from liberal to conservative. That theism is inherently morally flawed makes it

unsurprising that it has failed to produce either societal success or peace (Paul 2012). That atheism is morally neutral gives it the ethical space to be associated with the best-operated national populations.

While the culturally perilous implications of the children's holocaust have been perturbingly under-appreciated even by atheists, many have long contended that the scriptures and doctrines of many faiths are seriously flawed to the degree that the archaic beliefs promote a wide variety of ethically and practically dubious autocratic, patriarchic, misogynist, intolerant values that increase the risk of social ills, including aggressive violence.

In broad terms, the archaic male domination inherent to all major sects is seriously antithetical to running efficacious societies. Specifically, exposure to the deity-ordained intense violence from personal to mass genocidal contained in the bible appears to elevate levels of aggression in the manner of violent media (Bushman et al. 2007). It should not be surprising that societies that follow scriptures in which the creator orders unprovoked wars of ethnic cleansing are prone to engage in aggressive wars (Paul 2012). The warrior nature of the biblical God's followers inspire opposition to firearms control – as per the phrase the “gun, God and the Bible” – in homicidal America (Paul 2009c; 2012). The results of Jensen (2006) suggest that populations that follow a conservative “malevolent” theology centered on battling satanic forces are prone towards higher levels of homicide than are followers of less fear based, “benevolent” doctrines. Because the severe retributive punishments favored by theo-conservatives (Grasmick et al. 1992) has had such a poor cost/benefit ratio that even they are reconsidering the policy. Bible-based juvenile corporal punishment (Dobson 2007a; 2007b) appears to contribute to a tendency towards violence in adult years (American Academy of Pediatrics 1998; 2000). Decety et al. (2015) find that altruism in children is lower in more religious national populations. Hood et al. (1986), Scheepers, Gijsberts, and Hello (2002) and Hall, Matz, and Wood (2010) find that higher levels of conservative theism are associated with elevated levels of racial and ethnic prejudice. The Hindu caste system may help explain why democratic India is being out performed by autocratic, non-religious China. The concept that there is but one god of salvation compels insufficiently enlightened Islam to impose harsh punishments on alleged critics of the faith (usually Christians) via anti-blasphemy laws. Scriptural injunctions against same-sex activity fuel homophobia, sometimes violent; this is resulting in massive and increasing oppression of gays by evangelicals and Muslims in Africa. The hardline patriarchy associated with many forms of arch-conservative theism justifies severe oppression of women in a number of underdeveloped countries, Islamic especially. Although less extreme, the patriarchal nature of conservative Christianity hinders the superior economics that result for female participation in business (Adler 2001; Stephenson 2004), traditional evangelical marriage may contribute to high levels of violence and instability (Bennett 2007), and conservative religious values do not appear to suppress uses of pornography to levels as low as those with more liberal views (Christianet 2006; Edelman 2009). Extensive research indicates that the biblically inspired abstinence-only sex education programs are not as efficacious in reducing adverse consequences of sexual activity as the less traditionalist, more pragmatic, protection-emphasizing programs directed towards Euroyouth (Wellings et al. 2006); Trenholm 2007; Paul 2009c; Rosenbaum 2009; Peipert et al. 2012; and Strayhorn and Strayhorn 2009) explicitly

demonstrate a link between high levels of theo-conservatism and unintended pregnancy. Not scriptural, however, is the theo-conservative project to stop abortions by making it murder subject to harsh punishments; the procedure is not banned in the bible, and bans are impractical because abortion is always very common even when illegal (Sedgh et al. 2007; Shah and Ahman 2009).

Powerful elements of the American religious right have strategically focused on promoting a series of what they claim are scripturally based wedge issues rather than addressing social ills (Philips 2006; Weisman and Cooperman 2006; Putman and Campbell 2010). Even as these conservative forces push for traditional, non-libertarian social values, their ideology conservative forces favors the deregulated, reduced taxation (especially for the wealthy), libertarian economic scheme that raises personal risk. As an adjunct to privatization, religious conservatives are promoting the displacement of government services with faith-based charities that increase outreach into the general population, even though data showing that faith-based charities are more effective than government alternatives has not been produced (Johnson, Tompkins, and Webb 2002) because many charities are inefficient, often fraudulent entities that lack the enormous financial resources and infrastructure needed to provide the comprehensive assistance that the government can offer (Stern 2013; contra Brooks 2006). America's high levels of adult and especially juvenile mortality are largely due to the lack of the comprehensive, cost-efficient medical system (Kawachi and Kennedy 2002; Sapolsky 2005; Schoen et al. 2005; Anderson, Frogner, and Reinhardt 2006; Banks, Mamot, and Oldfield 2006; Winkleby et al. 2006; Paul 2008; Reid 2009; Wilkinson and Pickett 2009; Anderson & Squires 2010; Muenning & Glied 2010; Squires 2011; Murray et al. 2013) that is opposed by most elements of the religious right because of opposition to socialistic policies in favor of more faith-based treatments.

Because the godly-religion socioeconomic hypothesis founded upon ideological faith, evidence to the contrary is likely to be downplayed or denied, hindering abandonment of the hypothesis when it fails. The bubble of denial of reality is most extreme when the perception of godly compulsion and an eternal paradise reinforces the hardline stance of fundamentalists. The libertarian socioeconomic hypothesis is another faith-based ideology because its core speculation is that maximal liberty cannot help but produce the best results. The theist and libertarian theories are similar to the communist faith-founded opinion that utmost egalitarianism creates the optimal socioeconomics. But the absence of absolutist supernatural justification may help explain why mass communism faded with remarkably little trouble and considerable speed when outcomes showed it was not generating the expected results. Based primarily on extemporized policies modified as needed by empirical results rather than rigid ideology, democratic atheoprogressivism is the most practical arrangement devised by humans.

As much as theists may disavow it, the evidence that theism is a direct contributor to societal ills, and that anachronistic theo-conservatism presents the main problem, is extensive. But left-center theism is an important contributory enabling agent. Like all theists, liberals and moderate believers promote devotion to a benign deity when it seems any supernatural being is anachronistic speculation, a benevolent creator is impossible, and worshipping any version of a supernatural designer is morally corrupt. Because theism of all varieties both impairs societal function and is unable to thrive in highly successful societies, the secular-democratic socioeconomic hypothesis is broadly operative.

Conclusions

As widely as it is still held, the godly-religion socioeconomic hypothesis is clearly incorrect, and the common phobia against atheism is unwarranted bigotry. Nor is the relationship between a/theism and societal performance neutral, with belief and disbelief in gods producing similar results. The democratic-secularism socioeconomic hypothesis is abundantly supported. In part because theism, especially theism of the conservative variety, that promotes worship of a child homicide committing creator produces poor outcomes. But even more because only atheism is left in good demographic health when technological consumerist societies are run well. But we must be careful about this. *Both theism and atheism can sink to moral and practical depravity as has too often been shown by history. But because only atheism can flourish in the finest conditions achieved by humans, it has the clear advantage.*

It is also necessary to be careful regarding what expression of atheism is beneficial. Autocratic atheism is as approximately defective as non-democratic theism. Within the context of democratic atheism, atheo-libertarianism is producing the inferior socioeconomic that slows atheization of societies, which is a reason why a sociopolitical war continues with the skeptical progressives. Atheo-progressivism alone is creating the success that in turn boosts atheism in a beneficial feedback effect. Atheolibertarians, atheo-communists, and theists of all stripes are alike in that they have failed to produce comprehensive evidence based on actual national examples that their particular theories are practical rather than faith-based speculations, and unless they do so only atheoprogressivism has been plausibly shown to produce the best results in the real world. And while we know that atheistic progressivism works reasonably well by tangible examples, it is very unlikely that the ideal libertarian or theistic societies dreamed of by their respective ideologues will ever come to pass for practical sociopolitical reasons.

One way or another the future of theism is correspondingly dismal. Because it cannot thrive in properly run societies, theism can never be the solution to socioeconomic ills, and has been taking it on the demographic chin as the expansion of the global middle driven by the spreading corporate-consumer culture spreads contributes to the parallel decline in overall world religiosity, while non-theism is now expanding with remarkable rapidity in the United States (Figure 27.6; Pew Forum 2015a). The further advancements of SciTech, including organization-unfriendly digital technologies, life extension, and the development of high-level synthetic intelligence, is probably not going to stem, much less reverse, the decline in belief in supernatural powers. As the death of most immature humans becomes part of the global discussion it should make it more difficult for theists to claim a moral high ground. The best hope for theism is for a major increase in the insecurity that religion needs to thrive – in this sense theo-conservative opposition to the progressive policies that damage theism by improving societies is logical. The region most vulnerable for such socioeconomic dysfunction is the Islamic world, which is enmeshed in a theological, cultural, political, and armed civil war similar to that through which Christianity passed centuries ago. It might seem that the expression of democracy-unfriendly populist nationalism that has gained currency in much of the world will favor theism, as it has in Russia. But that degrading socioeconomic circumstances do not necessarily result in retheozation, along with the other powerful forces favoring non-piety, do not bode well for the religious community and industry.

A technosociological joker progressing onto center stage this century is extreme cybertechnology. As cybermachines increasingly approach humans in physical adeptness and especially mental capacity, a lack of employment opportunities for humans may elevate the insecurity that facilitates supernaturalistic practices. But libertarian economics offers no mechanism to address mass unemployment produced by free market robotics, so progressive income policies less friendly to theism may be necessary to prevent an economic implosion, resulting in less theism.

Notes

- 1 The Expanded Successful Societies Scale is an enlargement of the SSS presented in Paul (2009a) and includes the additional factors plotted here (for plots and correlation values of the factors included in the original SSS see Paul (2009a) online. Pearsons correlations are in the lower left corners in the scatter plots in this chapter.
- 2 For bankruptcy statistics for various years see American Bankruptcy Institute, available at <https://www.abi.org/newsroom/bankruptcy-statistics> (accessed 26 October 2018).

References

- Adler, R. (2001) "Women in the executive suite: Correlate to higher profits." *Harvard Business Review* 79: 30.
- Alexander, M. (2012) *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: New Press.
- American Academy of Pediatrics (1998) "Policy statement: Guidance for effective discipline." *Pediatrics* 101: 723–728.
- American Academy of Pediatrics (2000) "Policy statement: Corporal punishment in schools." *Pediatrics* 106: 343.
- Anderson, G., and Squires, D. (2010) *Measuring the US Health Care System: A Cross-National Comparison*. The Commonwealth Fund. Available at https://www.commonwealthfund.org/sites/default/files/documents/___media_files_publications_issue_brief_2010_jun_1412_anderson_measuring_us_hlt_care_sys_intl_ib.pdf (accessed 25 September 2018).
- Anderson, G., Frogner, B., and Reinhardt, U. (2006) "Health care spending and use of information technology in OECD countries." The Commonwealth Fund. Available at <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/journal-article/2006/may/health-care-spending-and-use-information-technology-oecd> (accessed 25 September 2018).
- Aral, S., and Holmes, K. (1996) "Social and behavioral determinants of the epidemiology of STDs: Industrialized and developing countries," in S. Morse, R. Ballard, K. Holmes, and A. Moreland (eds.) *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*, 3rd edn. New York: McGraw-Hill, pp. 39–76.
- Arias, E. (2016) "Changes in life expectancy by race and hispanic origin in the United States." NCHS Data Brief No. 244, CDC. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db244.htm> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Banks, J. Mamot, M., and Oldfield, Z. (2006) "Disease and disadvantage in the United States and in England." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 295: 2037–2045.
- Barber, N. (2011) "A cross-national test of the uncertainty hypothesis of religious belief." *Cross-Cultural Research* 45: 318–333.
- Barna, G. (2004) "Born again Christians just as likely to divorce as are non-Christians." *Barna Research Online*. Available at <https://www.barna.com/research/born-again-christians-just-as-likely-to-divorce-as-are-non-christians/> (accessed 25 September 2018).

- Barro, R. (2004) "Spirit of capitalism: Religion and economic development/" *Harvard International Review*. Winter. Available at <http://hir.harvard.edu/article/?a=1193> (accessed 25 September 2018).
- Barro, R. and McCleary, R. (2003) "Religion and economic growth." NBER Working Paper No. w9682. Available at <https://ssrn.com/abstract=406054> (accessed 25 September 2018).
- Beehley, L. (2003) *Homicide: A Sociological Explanation*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bennett, L. (2007) *The Feminine Mistake*. New York: Voice.
- Berg, A., and Ostry, J. (2011) "Inequality and unsustainable growth: two sides of the same coin?" IMF Staff Discussion Note. Available at www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2011/sdn1108.pdf (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Bijl, R., de Graaf, R., Hiripi, E., Kessler, R. C., Kohn, R., and Wittchen, H. (2003). "Prevalence of treated and untreated mental disorders in five countries." *Health Affairs* 22: 122–133.
- Bloom, P. (2008) "Does religion make you nice? Does atheism make you mean?" Available at http://www.lateslate.com/articles/life/faithbased/2008/11/does_religion_make_you_nice.html (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Blumenthal, J., Babyak, M. A., Ironson, G., Thoresen, C., Powell, L., Czajkowski, S... The ENRICH Investigators (2007) "Spirituality, religion, and clinical outcomes in patients recovering from an acute myocardial infarction." *Psychosomatic Medicine* 69: 501–508.
- Borghol, N., Suderman, M., McCardle, W., et al. (2012) "Associations with early-life socio-economic position in adult DNA methylation." *International Journal of Epidemiology* 41: 62–74.
- Brooks, A. (2006) *Who Really Cares?* New York: Basic Books.
- Bushman, B., Ridge, R., Das, E., Key, C., and Busath, G. (2007) "When God sanctions killing: Effect of scriptural violence on aggression." *Psychological Science* 18: 204–207.
- Chida, Y., Steptoe, A., and Powell, C. (2009) "Religiosity/spirituality and mortality" *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* 78: 81–90.
- Christianet (2006) "Evangelicals are addicted to porn." Available at <http://christiannews.christianet.com/1154951956.htm> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Corak, M. (2013) "Income inequality, equality of opportunity, and intergenerational mobility." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 27: 79–102.
- Coyne, J. (2013) "Acceptance of evolution vs. religiosity in the US: Why evolution is true." Available at <https://whyevolutionistrue.wordpress.com/2013/04/07/acceptance-of-evolution-vs-religiosity-in-the-u-s> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Cragun, R., Kosmin, B., Keysar, A., Hammer, J. H., and Nielsen, M. (2012) "On the receiving end: Discrimination toward the non-religious in the United States." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 27: 105–127.
- Decety, J., Cowell, J. M., Lee, K. et al. (2015) "The negative association between religiousness and children's altruism across the world." *Current Biology* 25: 1–5.
- Degenhardt, L., Chiu, W., Sampson, N., Kessler, R., Anthony, J., Angermeyer, M., and Wells, J. (2008) "Toward a global view of alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, and cocaine use: Findings from the WHO World Mental Health Surveys." *PloS Medicine* 5: 1053–1067.
- Delamontagne, R. (2010) "High religiosity and societal dysfunction in the United States during the first decade of the twenty-first century." *Evolutionary Psychology* 8: 617–657.
- Dobson, J. (2007a) "Does spanking work for all kids?." *Focus on the Family*. Available from <http://www.family.org/parenting/A000001547.cfm> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Dobson, J. (2007b) "To spank or not to spank." *Focus on the Family*. Available from <http://www.family.org/parenting/A000001548.cfm> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Doyle, R. (2000) "The roots of homicide." *Scientific American* 283(3): 22.
- Doyle, R. (2002) "Quality of life." *Scientific American* 286(4): 32.
- Dyer, J. (2000) *The Perpetual Prisoner Machine: How America Profits from Crime*. Boulder: Westover Press.

- Edelman, B. (2009) "Red light states: Who buys online adult entertainment?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 23: 209–220.
- Edgell, P., Gerteis, J., and Hartmann, D. (2006). "Atheists as 'Other': Moral boundaries and cultural membership in American society." *American Sociological Review* 71: 211–234.
- Ezzati, M., Friedman, A., Kulkarni, S., and Murray, C. (2008) "The reversal of fortunes: Trends in county mortality and cross-country mortality disparities in the united states." *PLoS Medicine* 5: e66.
- Friedli, L. (2009) *Mental Health, Resilience and Inequalities: How Individuals and Communities are Affected*. World Health Organization. Available at http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/100821/E92227.pdf (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Galen, L., and Kloet, J. (2011) "Mental well-being in the religious and non-religious: Evidence for a curvilinear relationship." *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* 14: 673–689.
- Gallup (2006) "Who believes in God and who doesn't?" *Gallup Brain*. Available at <https://news.gallup.com/poll/23470/who-believes-god-who-doesnt.aspx> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Gallup (2014) "Mississippi most religious state, Vermont least religious." Available at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/167267/mississippi-religious-vermont-least-religious-state.aspx> (accessed 25 October 2018).
- Geoghegan, T. (2010) *Were you Born on the Wrong Continent?* New York: New Press.
- Gervais, W., Shariff, A., and Norenzayan, A. (2011) "Do you believe in atheists? Distrust is central to anti-atheist prejudice." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101: 1189–1206.
- Gill, A., and Lundsgaarde, E. (2004) "State welfare spending and religiosity." *Rationality and Society* 16: 399–436.
- Grasmick, H., Davenport, G., Chamblin, M., and Bursick, R. (1992) "Protestant fundamentalism and the retributive doctrine of punishment." *Criminology* 30: 21–45.
- Hackett, J., Sengupta, R., Zylicz, J., et al. (2013) "Germline demethylation dynamics and imprint erasure through 5-hydroxymethylcytosine." *Science* 339: 448–452.
- Hall, D., Matz, D., and Wood, W. (2010) "Why don't we practice what we preach? A meta-analytic review of religious racism." *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 14: 126–139.
- Harris, S. (2006) *Letter to a Christian Nation*. New York: Knopf.
- Himmelstein, D., Warren, E., Thorne, D., and Wollhandler, S. (2005) "Illness and injury as contributors to bankruptcy." *Health Affairs*. Available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15689369> (accessed 24 September 2018).
- Hood, R., Bernard, S., Hunsberger, B., and Gorsuch, R. (1986) *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Inzlicht, M., McGregor, I., Hirsh, J., and Nash, K. (2009) "Neural markers of religious conviction." *Psychological Science* 20: 385–392.
- Ipsos (2011) "Supreme being, the afterlife and evolution." Available at <https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/news-polls/ipsos-global-dvisory-supreme-beings-afterlife-and-evolution> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- ISSP (2001) "Religion II," International Social Survey Program. Current dataset, doi: 10.4232/1.3680. Available at <https://dbk.gesis.org/dbksearch/sdesc2.asp?no=3190&search=1998%20issp&search2=&field=all&field2=&DB=e&tab=0¬abs=&nf=1&af=&ll=10> (accessed 25 September 2018).
- Jensen, G. (2006) "Religious cosmologies and homicide rates among nations: A closer look." *Journal of Religion and Society* 8: 1–14.
- Johnson, B., Tompkins, R., and Webb, D. (2002) "Objective hope: Assessing the effectiveness of faith-based organizations: A review of the literature." *Manhattan Institute for Policy Research*. Available at http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/crrucs-obj_hope.htm (accessed 24 September 2018).
- Kawachi, I., and Kennedy, B. (2002) *The Health of Nations: Why Inequality is Harmful to your Health*. New York: New Press.

- Keister, L. (2008) "Conservative Protestants and wealth: How religion perpetuates asset poverty." *American Journal of Sociology* 113: 1237–1271.
- Komlos, J., and Lauderdale, B. (2007) "Underperformance in affluence: The remarkable relative decline in US heights in the second half of the 20th century." *Social Science Quarterly* 88: 283–305.
- Malinowski, B. (1954) *Magic, Science and Religion: And Other Essays*. New York: Doubleday Anchor.
- Malloch, T. (2003) *Social, Human and Spiritual Capital in Economic Development*. Available at <http://www.metanexus.net/archive/spiritualcapitalresearchprogram/pdf/malloch.pdf> (accessed 25 September 2018).
- Mani, A., Mullainathan, S., Shafir, E. and Zhao, J. (2013) "Poverty impedes cognitive function." *Science* 341: 976–980.
- Marlowe, F. (2010) *The Hadza: Hunter-gatherers of Tanzania*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Marmot, M. (2004) *The status syndrome*. London: Bloomsburg.
- Murray, C., et al. (2013) "US burden of disease collaborators: The state of US health, 1990–2010: Burden of diseases, injuries, and risk factors." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 310: 591–608.
- Noah, T. (2102) *The Great Divergence: America's Growing Inequality Crisis and What We Can Do About It*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Norenzayan, A., and Shariff, A. (2008) "The origin and evolution of religious prosociality." *Science* 322: 58–62.
- Norris, P., and Inglehart, R. (2004) *Sacred and Secular*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Park, J., Tom, J., and Andercheck, B. (2014) "Fifty years of religious change." *Council on Contemporary Families*. Paper presented by Jerry Z. Park at the Council on Contemporary Families Civil Rights. Available at <https://contemporaryfamilies.org/50-years-of-religious-change> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Paul, G. (2005) "Cross-national correlations of quantifiable societal health with popular religiosity and secularism in the prosperous democracies." *Journal of Religion and Society* 7. Available from <https://dspace2.creighton.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10504/64409/2005-11.pdf?sequence=1> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Paul, G. (2008) "The remote prayer delusion: Clinical trials that attempt to detect supernatural intervention are as futile as they are unethical." *Journal of Medical Ethics* 34: e18.
- Paul, G. (2009a) "The chronic dependence of popular religiosity upon dysfunctional psychosociological conditions." *Evolutionary Psychology* 7: 398–441.
- Paul, G. (2009b) "Theodicy's problem: A statistical look at the holocaust of the children and the implications of natural evil for the free will and best of all possible worlds hypotheses." *Philosophy and Theology* 19: 125–149.
- Paul, G. (2009c) "How are other First-World nations suppressing the adverse consequences of violence and youth sex in the modern media environment?" *Pediatrics* 123: e364.
- Paul, G. (2010a) "The evolution of popular religiosity and secularism: How First World statistics reveal why religion exists, why it has been popular, and why the most successful democracies are the most secular," in P. Zuckerman (ed.) *Atheism and Secularity*. Santa Barbara: Praeger, pp. 49–209.
- Paul, G. (2010b) "Religiosity tied to socioeconomic conditions." *Science* 327: 642.
- Paul, G. (2012) "Why religion is unable to minimize lethal and nonlethal societal dysfunction within and between nations," in T. Shackelford and V. Weekes (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook on Evolutionary Perspectives on Violence, Homicide, and War*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 435–470.
- Paul, G. (2014) "The health of nations: An empirical study on the effects of religion and economic policy." *Sceptic* 19: 10–16.
- Paul, G., and Zuckerman, P. (2011) "Don't dump on atheists." *Washington Post*, A15.

- Peipert, J., Madden, T., Allsworth, J., and Secura, G. (2012) "Preventing unintended pregnancies by providing no-cost contraceptives." *Obstetrics and Gynecology* 120: 1291–1297.
- Pew Forum (2002) "Among wealthy nations US stands alone in its embrace of religion." *Pew Global Attitudes Project*. Available at <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/pdf/167.pdf> (accessed 25 September 2018).
- Pew Forum (2014a) "Religious hostilities reach six-year high." Available at <http://www.pewforum.org/2014/01/14/religious-hostilities-reach-six-year-high> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Pew Forum (2014b) "Millennials in Adulthood." Available at <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/03/07/millennials-in-adulthood/> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Pew Forum (2015a) "America: Changing religious landscapes." Available at <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Pew Forum (2015b) "The future of world religions: Population growth projections, 2010–2050." Available at <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050> (accessed 20 December 2018).
- Philips, M. (2006) *Londonistan: How Britain is Creating a Terror State Within*. New York: Encounter Books.
- Powell, L., Shahabi, L., and Thoresen, C. (2003) "Religion and spirituality: Linkages to physical health." *American Psychologist* 58: 36–52.
- Putnam, R., and Campbell, D. (2010) *American Grace*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- RedC. (2012) "Global index of religion and atheism." Available at <https://sidmennt.is/wp-content/uploads/Gallup-International-um-tr%C3%BA-og-tr%C3%BAleysi-2012.pdf> (accessed 25 September 2018).
- Rees, T. (2009) "Is personal insecurity a cause of cross-national differences in the intensity of religious belief?" *Journal of Religion and Society* 11: 1–24.
- Reid, T. (2004) *The United States of Europe*. New York: Penguin.
- Reid, T. (2009) *The Healing of America*. New York: Penguin.
- Rosenbaum, E. (2009) "Patient teenagers? A comparison of the sexual behavior of virginity pledgers and matched non-pledgers" *Pediatrics* 123: e110–e120.
- Ruiter, S., and Tubergen, F. (2009) "Religious attendance in cross-national perspective: A multi-level analysis of 60 countries." *American Journal of Sociology* 115: 863–895.
- Sapolsky, R. (2005) "Sick of poverty." *Scientific American* 293/6: 92–99.
- Scheepers, P., Gijsberts, M., and Hello, E. (2002) "Religiosity and prejudice against ethnic minorities in Europe: Cross-national tests on a controversial relationship." *Review of Religious Research* 43: 242–265.
- Schoen, C., Osborn, R., Huynh, P. T. et al. (2005) "Taking the pulse of health care systems: Experience of patients with health problems in six countries/" *PubMed* (Suppl.). Available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16269444> (accessed 25 September 2018).
- Sedgh, G., Henshaw, S., Singh, S., Ahman, E., and Shah, I. H. (2007) "Induced abortion: Estimated rates and trends worldwide." *The Lancet* 37: 1338–1345.
- Shah, I., and Ahman, E. (2009) "Unsafe abortion: Global and regional incidence, trends, consequences, and challenges." *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Canada* 12: 1149–1158.
- Squires, D. (2011) "The US health system in perspective: A comparison of twelve industrialized nations." *Issues of International Health Policy* 16: 1–14.
- Stephenson, C. (2004) "Leveraging diversity to maximum advantage: The business case for appointing more women to boards." *Ivery Business Journal*, 69: 1–5.
- Stern, K. (2013) *With Charity for All: Why Charities are Failing and a Better Way to Give*. New York: Doubleday.
- Stiglitz, J. (2012) *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers our Future*. New York: Norton.

- Strayhorn, J., and Strayhorn, J. (2009) "Religiosity and teen birth rate in the United States." *Reproductive Health* 6: 1–7.
- Tomlinson, J. (1991) *Cultural Imperialism: A Critical Introduction*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Transparency International (2010) *Corruption perceptions index*. Available at <https://www.transparency.org/cpi2010/results> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Trenholm, B. (2007) "Impacts of four Title V section 510 'abstinence education programs.'" Report to Congress. Available at <https://aspe.hhs.gov/report/impacts-four-title-v-section-510-abstinence-education-programs> (accessed 25 September 2018).
- Tyler, G. (2013) *What Went Wrong: How the 1% Hijacked the American Middle Class ... and What Other Countries Got Right*. Dallas: BenBolla Books.
- United Nations (2009) *Human development report 2009*. Table K: Gender empowerment measure and its components. New York: United Nations Development Program.
- United Nations (2016) *World Happiness Report*. Available at <http://worldhappiness.report/ed/2016/> (accessed 25 October 2018).
- United Nations (2008) *Human Development Report 2007/2008: Fighting Climate Change*. UNDP, New York: Routledge. Available at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/268/hdr_20072008_en_complete.pdf (accessed 25 September 2018).
- Uslaner, E. (2002) *The Moral Foundations of Trust*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Verweij, J., Ester, P., and Nauta, R. (1997) "Secularization as an economic and cultural phenomenon." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36: 309–324.
- Wallace, M., Bradley, R. E., Wright, A. H. (2014) "Religious affiliation and hiring discrimination in the American South: A field experiment." *Social Currents* 1: 189–207.
- WEF (2013) "*The Global Competitiveness Report 2012–2013*." World Economic Forum. Available at www.weforum.org/reports/global-competitiveness-report-2012-2013 (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Weisman, J., and Cooperman, A. (2006) "A religious protest largely from the left: Conservative Christians say fighting cuts in poverty programs is not a priority." *Washington Post*, 14 December.
- Wellings, K., Collumbien, M., Slaymaker, E., Singh, S., Hodges, Z., Patel, D., and Bajos, N. (2006) "Sexual behaviour in context: A global perspective." *Lancet* 368:1706–1728.
- Wilkinson, R., and Pickett, K. (2009) *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*. London: Allen Lane.
- Winkleby, M., Cubbin, C., and Ahn, D. (2006) "Individual socioeconomic status, neighborhood socioeconomic status, and adult mortality." *American Journal of Public Health* 96: 2145–2153.
- Woolf, S. (2013) "US health in international perspective: Shorter lives, poorer health." *National Research Council and Institute of Medicine*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- Yang, C. (1970) *Religion in Chinese Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Zuckerman, P. (2008) *A Society Without God: What the Least Religious Nations can tell us about Contentment*. New York: New York University Press.
- Zuckerman, P. (2009) "Atheism, secularity, and well-being: How the findings of social science counter negative stereotypes and assumptions." *Sociology Compass* 3: 949–971.

Violence

STEVE CLARKE

Some scholars, such as Juergensmeyer (2003) and Avalos (2005), argue that religion is a significant cause of violence. Others, including Ward (2006) and Kimball (2008), argue that religion is not a significant cause of violence, even though it is often used as an excuse for violence. Furthermore, they point out, religion can be used to help prevent violence.¹ There is deep disagreement about the significance of the causal relationship between religion and violence and about its overall direction. The depth of this disagreement is indicative of the difficulties involved in understanding the relationship between religion and violence.

Religious beliefs are able to motivate violence, as are the powerful emotions that participation in religious rituals and other religious practices can create. Religion can also motivate people to try to prevent violence. Unfortunately, it is difficult to determine how powerful a motivator – and preventer – of violence religion is because the motives that religion provides for violence – and for the prevention of violence – are not publicly accessible. An inquisitor, participating in the Spanish Inquisition, might claim to be motivated to torture a *converso* for religious reasons. But his actual reasons for torturing that *converso* may be personal or political ones. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella may have claimed to be motivated to support the Spanish Inquisition because they regarded the suppression of Crypto-Judaism as required by their Catholic faith. But they may actually have been unconcerned by Crypto-Judaism and motivated to support the Spanish Inquisition by a desire to suppress opposition to their rule. Another possibility is that they may have been motivated both by a desire to suppress political opposition and by a desire to uphold Catholic values, as they understood them.² It is very hard for a third party to know what is motive and what is pretext. Because it is hard to know what is motive and what is pretext it is very hard to determine whether and when a stated motive for an action genuinely motivates that action.

The difficulty of distinguishing motive from pretext is further complicated in the case of religion because people can have complicated relationships with religion that can

develop over time. Adolf Hitler appears to have had a complicated relationship with Christianity. Hitler was brought up Catholic, and at various times he described himself as a Catholic, and as a Christian. However, at other times he was highly critical of Christianity, blaming it for the rise of communist states and associating it with Judaism, which he loathed (Dawkins 2006, pp. 272–278). It's possible that Hitler left religion behind at a young age, but cynically pretended to be religious for political reasons, as various people have alleged (e.g. Bullock 1952). But it is also possible that he retained religious beliefs, which underwent a transformation over the course of his lifetime, as they became entangled with his national socialist political ideals. The official religious doctrine of the National Socialist party was “Positive Christianity,” which involved a mix of traditional Christian doctrines with non-traditional ideas about the importance of racial purity (Hastings 2009). It may be that the mature Hitler held religious beliefs that were consistent with the doctrines of Positive Christianity, and it may be that many of the violent actions that Hitler authorized were motivated by those beliefs. But it might also be that those violent actions were actually motivated by his political ideals and by his racial prejudices. In Hitler's case these two hypotheses are difficult to disambiguate because Positive Christianity was itself shaped by Hitler's political ideals and his racial prejudices. Not many people start their own religion, as did Hitler and the National Socialists. But many people's interpretations of religious doctrines develop over time and can be shaped by their political outlook and by their various prejudices.

It is sometimes pointed out that the most orderly and peaceful countries that there are nowadays are countries such as Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, in which rates of participation in organized religion are very low. Furthermore, the world's least peaceful societies, including Colombia, Zimbabwe, and Pakistan, are amongst the most religious (Zuckerman 2014, pp. 47–48). This pattern is replicated within the United States, where states with low reported levels of belief in God have significantly lower rates of homicide, and other violent crimes, than states in which high levels of belief in God are reported (Zuckerman 2014, pp. 49–50). It may seem tempting to infer, on the basis of this information, that religiosity persistently correlates with violence because religion is a significant cause of violence. But we should resist this inference. What may well be going on is that violence is causing religion. People who live in badly organized, poorly governed societies, in which they are regularly exposed to the threat of violence, such as Columbia, Zimbabwe, and Pakistan, are more likely to feel the need for the sense of comfort that religion can provide – and so are more likely to be religious – than people who live in well-organized and well-governed societies, such as Norway, Denmark, and Sweden (Norris and Inglehart 2011, p. 53).

Another problem for those who wish to argue for a decisive view about the causal relationship between religion and violence is that it is hard to know how violent humans would be in the absence of religion. We cannot easily determine whether religion adds to, or subtracts from, the level of violence that would be present in human societies that lack religion, because there are no known human societies that lack religion and we have no record, going back tens of thousands of years, of human societies which have lacked religion (Powell and Clarke 2012). A possible source of warrant for the claim that religion is an overall cause of violence comes from consideration of the evolutionary origins of religion. Those who argue that religion is an evolutionary adaptation, such as Haidt (2012), Powell and Clarke (2012), and Wilson (2002), argue that the

reason that there are no non-religious human societies is because religious human societies out-competed non-religious ones in our distant past. This happened, they argue, because, *inter alia*, religion strengthened the cohesiveness of human societies, and more cohesive societies out-competed less cohesive societies. Religion suppresses free riding (Bering and Johnson 2005), produces signs of cooperative intent (Henrich 2009), and serves as a hard-to-fake indication of group membership (Sosis 2005). An additional way in which religious societies may have out-competed non-religious societies is by better enabling coordinated violent actions against other societies. Indeed, it has been argued that religion is an evolutionary adaptation for war (Johnson and Reeve 2013). However, this line of reasoning is somewhat speculative. It may be that the most significant ways in which religious societies outcompeted non-religious societies were by disposing their members to produce more offspring than were produced by members of non-religious societies, by recruiting members from non-religious societies, and simply by outlasting less cohesive non-religious societies (Clarke 2014, p. 46).

It should be borne in mind that many scholars working on religion, including Boyer (2001) and Barrett (2004), deny that religion evolved because it conferred any evolutionary advantages. They see religion as an evolutionary by-product of our cognitive development, rather than an evolutionary adaptation. On their view our cognitive structures evolved in ways that bias our reasoning and dispose us to commit certain sorts of systematic cognitive errors. It is these cognitive biases that lead us to be religious and not any evolutionary advantages that religion confers. If religion is a mere evolutionary by-product, then it is not an adaptation for anything, so it is not an adaptation for war.

A problem for those who hold that there is an easy-to-determine causal relationship between religion and violence is that the concept “violence” is a contested one. Different definitions of violence will make a difference to whether and to what degree it is plausible to portray religion as a significant cause of violence. On some views, violence is best understood as action which is intended to cause physical harm (Clarke 2014, p. 8). However, violence can be understood more broadly, to include action that is intended to cause psychological as well as physical harm (Audi 1971, p. 52). Religion is often accused of causing psychological harm. For example, Richard Dawkins makes much of the trauma that children brought up in salvific religious traditions can experience, when threatened with the prospect of eternal suffering in hell (Dawkins 2006, pp. 318–322). Whether or not this form of psychological harm counts as violence depends on how we define “violence.”

Just as there are disputes about what counts as violence, there are also disputes about what counts as religion. It is notoriously difficult to provide a satisfactory definition of religion. Cavanaugh (2009) is well known for his critique of the “myth of religious violence.” At the heart of his critique is his assertion that there is no unified subject “religion” to be defined. He argues that because none of the various definitions of religion that are on offer have succeeded in capturing all of the ways in which the term “religion” has been used, at different times and in different places, there is no such thing as religion which could be said to cause violence (Cavanaugh 2009, pp. 55–61). I regard this as a fallacious piece of reasoning. To see why, consider an analogy. The term “water” has been used in various different ways. The now dominant dihydrogen oxide definition of water has it that water is the liquid form of a molecule that is formed by

bonding two hydrogen atoms to one oxygen atom. This definition is not consistent with many of the ways in which the term “water” has been used in non-Western cultures, as well as many of the ways that it was used in Western cultures, before the rise of Daltonian atomic theory (Needham 2002). For example, the Daltonian theory is not compatible with the Aristotelean theory, which has it that water is a fundamental element that cannot be divided into component parts. But we should not infer from this observation that there is no such thing as water. Rather, we should infer from the fact that the dihydrogen oxide theory of water better explains the observed behavior of paradigm instances of water than any rival theory, and better coheres with other established scientific theories than any rival theory, that the dihydrogen oxide definition of water is correct and that uses of the term “water” which are inconsistent with the dihydrogen oxide definition of water, such as the Aristotelean one, are misuses.

There is a phenomenon which is found in all human cultures, involving the combination of beliefs, rituals, and moral prescriptions, which we call religion. The fact that some people have sometimes defined religion in ways that have failed to capture key aspects of this phenomenon and have offered very different definitions of religion, should not lead us to give up trying to define religion. Nor should it lead us to give up on the project of trying to determine whether or not this phenomenon – religion – bears causal relationships to other social phenomena, such as violence. In *The Justification of Religious Violence*, I offer the following definition of religion: “A religion is a collection of beliefs, always including beliefs in supernatural agents, and practices, always including ritualistic practices, that a community have in common and which help to shape the morality of that community” (Clarke 2014, p. 53). In my view this definition better accounts for available evidence about paradigm instances of religion than any rival definition (Clarke 2014, pp. 51–54).

Currently available evidence does not allow us to determine whether religion is, or is not, a significant cause of violence. Nevertheless, there are arguments about the relationship between religion and violence which are worth considering, as these could give us grounds to favor particular views about the significance, and overall direction, of the relationship between religion and violence, in the absence of decisive evidence. In the remainder of this chapter we will consider three types of arguments about the relationship between religion and violence. In the next section we will consider arguments relating religion to violence via morality. It is sometimes alleged that a lack of religion makes people less moral than they would be otherwise. If people are less moral than they would be otherwise then, all things being equal, they can be expected to be more violent than they would be otherwise, as they will lack the ordinary moral constraints that lead us to refrain from violence. In the following section we will consider the relationships between religion, tolerance, and intolerance. Sometimes it is alleged that religion makes people more tolerant than they would be otherwise, and sometimes it is alleged that religion makes people less tolerant than they would be otherwise. All things being equal, if people become more intolerant, they can reasonably be expected to become more violent and if people become more tolerant then they can reasonably be expected to be less violent. In the final section we consider the issue of justification. We will consider whether or not religion offers forms of justifications for violence that are unavailable to those who are not religious. We will also consider whether or not the

ability of religion to provide forms of justifications for violence, which are unavailable to atheists, would lead religion to cause more violence than would be caused in the absence of religion.

Religion and Morality

The religious are often distrustful of atheists.³ People tend to have higher levels of trust in those who they identify as fellow members of in-groups than they do with those they identify as members of out-groups. But the degree of suspicion that the religious show towards atheists cannot be fully accounted for by the fact that atheists are viewed as members of out-groups by the religious. Atheists are considered by the religious to be significantly less trustworthy than are members of religious out-groups (Tan and Vogel 2008). The religious often doubt that atheists are motivated to behave morally and they tend to view atheists as “self-interested individuals who are not concerned with the common good” (Edgell, Gerteis, and Hartmann 2006, p. 227).⁴ If this characterization of atheists is accurate then there is good reason to fear that atheists might be more violent than are the religious. When they can get away with it, and when it is in their interests to do so, self-serving, amoral atheists can be expected to behave violently towards others. However, the religious will not behave violently in many such circumstances, because they are concerned with the welfare of people other than themselves and because they are constrained by a commitment to morality. An influential explanation for the conviction, amongst many of the religious, that atheists are not motivated to behave morally, is that atheists do not fear divine retribution for immoral behavior (Gervais and Norenzayan 2013). Followers of other religions may be supposed to have false beliefs about God, and may worship false gods, but at least, it is thought, they are God-fearing, and so motivated by their religion to behave morally.

The view that atheists lack sufficient motivation to behave morally appears to make sense if we accept the divine command theory of morality. On this theory God’s command that murder is wrong makes it true that murder wrong. Because the atheist does not believe that God exists, the atheist does not believe that anything makes it true that murder is wrong. So, the atheist is not motivated to refrain from committing murder, when he or she can get away with it. A problem with this line of reasoning is that it assumes that the atheist needs to have a clear argument for the conclusion that murder is wrong before being motivated to refrain from committing acts of murder. But evolved moral sentiment may be sufficient to motivate us to refrain from murdering others. We have evolved to feel guilt and shame when we commit anti-social acts, such as murder, and our knowledge that these feelings will grip us, as a result of committing acts of murder, helps to discourage us from murdering others (Boehm 2012).

The divine command theory of morality runs into trouble when faced with the “Euthyphro problem,” as spelled out in the Socratic dialogue, *The Euthyphro* (Plato 2015). The problem is that if we accept that divine commands create morality then we appear to be committed to a series of implausible-sounding counterfactuals. We appear to be committed to the claim that if God commands that murder of the innocent is morally obligatory then we are morally obliged to murder the innocent. And we appear

to be committed to the claim that if God commands that we refrain from giving money to charity then we are morally obliged to refrain from giving money to charity. But both of these claims seem very implausible. Surely, even if God pronounced that the murder of the innocent is morally obligatory and charitable donations morally impermissible, it would remain immoral to murder the innocent and morally acceptable to donate to charity. Supernatural beings, such as God, might be able to identify (or misidentify) moral truths, but there are highly counterintuitive consequences that we would need to accept if we are to embrace the view that supernatural beings, such as God, actually create those moral truths.⁵

The religious do not have to accept a divine command theory of morality to remain concerned about the moral commitment of atheists. They can concede that atheists may be motivated to act morally, but insist that atheists are not as motivated to act morally as are the religious. Many religious believers are motivated by the promise of the reward of a superior afterlife if they behave morally and motivated by the threat of an inferior afterlife if they behave immorally. The atheist has no grounds to believe in an afterlife, so the atheist lacks a source of motivation that the religious have, to behave morally.

The view that belief in supernatural rewards and punishments has played an important role in the evolution of human morality has recently been advanced by scholars working in the cognitive science of religion, including Norenzayan (2013) and Johnson (2016). Norenzayan and Johnson both argue that fear of the wrath of punishing gods evolved in human societies because it helped solve free-rider problems. “Big Gods,” to use Norenzayan’s terminology, are all-seeing and extremely powerful. The belief that those who do not act in pro-social ways will be observed and then punished, by a wrathful Big God, is a significant incentive for members of religious societies to act in pro-social ways and to resist any temptation to free-ride on their society. Societies in which belief in Big Gods was widespread were less susceptible to the undermining influence of free-riding than societies that lacked belief in Big Gods, and so they tended to out-compete societies that lacked belief in Big Gods, or so Norenzayan (2013) and Johnson (2016) argue.

Even though scholars working in the cognitive science of religion, including Norenzayan and Johnson, have located support for the view that belief in supernatural punishment has played a role in the evolution of morality, the cognitive science of religion does not appear to provide support for the inference that, therefore, atheists are less moral than are the religious. Beliefs in supernatural punishments and rewards are supported by a raft of evolved cognitive biases, including a tendency to over-attribute causal relations to the world, and to underestimate the extent to which coincidences occur, as well as tendencies to over-attribute agency to the world, to hold dualistic metaphysical beliefs, and to assume that people tend to get what they deserve (Johnson 2016, pp. 117–130). Religion can organize and help us to make sense of these innate cognitive biases, which infect our thinking, by providing us with narratives of supernatural reward and punishment. But even in the absence of such narratives, people will develop implicit and powerful expectations about the consequences of both their moral and immoral behavior; and, as a result, they will be motivated to act morally and to avoid acting immorally (Johnson 2016, p. 134). So, even though atheists do not consciously accept supernatural punishment theory, we can still explain their behavior by appealing to that theory. It follows, therefore, that we should not conclude that the failure of

atheists to accept that there are supernatural consequences resulting from their moral and immoral behavior makes them less moral than the religious.

Tolerance and Intolerance

It is often asserted that mainstream religions promote tolerance. It looks like we can make a strong *prima facie* case for Christianity as a promoter of tolerance. The bible tells us to love our enemies, forgive offences, and respond to aggression by “turning the other cheek.” These are all prescriptions that seem conducive to tolerance. However, some opponents of religion, including Richard Dawkins (2001), see Christianity and other Abrahamic religions as promoters of intolerance. There are passages in the bible in which God instructs the Israelites to commit genocide, in which God demands that people who disobey him be put to death, in which Jesus threatens people with eternal damnation, and in which Jesus instructs his followers to sell some of their clothing and use the money raised to purchase swords (Clarke 2014, pp. 16–19). These passages seem easier to reconcile with a construal of Christianity as an intolerant rather than a tolerant religion. Christian scripture can be used to promote both tolerance and intolerance; and the same can be said for the holy scripture of the other major religions of the world (Clarke 2014, p. 19).

If religion is a promoter of tolerance, all things considered, then religion is likely to mitigate the human propensity to act violently. But if religion is an overall promoter of intolerance, then it is likely to exacerbate the human propensity to act violently. The tolerant make a principled decision to refrain from interfering with the tolerated behavior of others, even when they disapprove of that behavior (Cohen 2004). The intolerant make no such decision. When they disapprove of an activity they are liable to attempt to prevent it from taking place. Not all such attempts will be violent, but some will. Furthermore, some non-violent attempts to interfere in the activities of others will lead to violence, as those whose activities are interfered with are liable to resort to violent means to try to prevent such interference.

Evidence from social psychology strongly suggests that religiosity correlates with intolerance. Religiosity has been found to be associated with several close correlates of intolerance, including racial prejudice (Allport and Kramer 1946), disapproval of non-conformity (Stouffer 1955) and a punitive rather than forgiving attitude (Kirkpatrick 1949). According to Batson and Ventis (1982), 34 of 44 findings, from 36 social-psychological studies conducted in the United States between 1940 and 1975, suggest that there is a positive relationship between intolerance and involvement in religion, with only two finding suggesting a negative relationship. We should be careful about laying the blame on religion for the persistent correlation between religion and intolerance. Much of the intolerance that is found amongst the religious may be driven by group dynamics rather than by religion itself. People tend to be less tolerant of those who they perceive as members of out-groups than they are of those who they perceive as members of in-groups (Hewstone, Rubin, and Willis 2002). Religious differences are often correlated with other forms of difference that serve to separate in-groups from out-groups. This can make it difficult to identify pure instances of intolerance based on religion. A male middle-class Orthodox Serb might be intolerant of a female working-class

Catholic Croat because she is Croatian, because she is working-class, because she is female, because she is Catholic, or for some combination of these reasons.

Clarke, Powell, and Savulescu (2013, pp. v–vi) argue that the best interpretation of the overall evidence from psychology, and also evolutionary anthropology, regarding the relationship between religion and tolerance, is that religion is an overall promoter of tolerance towards members of in-groups and intolerance towards members of out-groups. If this is right, and if religious intolerance is also an overall promoter of violence – which seems reasonable to believe – then we can draw the following conclusion about the relationship between religion, tolerance and violence. In societies in which people practice a range of different religions, religion will be overall promoter of intolerance, and therefore, of violence. However, in societies in which there is a lack of religious diversity, religion will be an overall promoter of tolerance, and will help to ameliorate violent activity. Of course religion will not make the members of religiously homogenous societies any more tolerant towards members of other societies who practice a different religion, or are otherwise identifiable as members of out-groups.

Religion and the Justification of Violence

In *The Justification of Religious Violence* (Clarke 2014) I examine justifications for violence that appeal to religion. Unlike authors such as Selengut (2003, p. 6), who depict religious behavior as free from the constraints of rationality and logic, I argue that many of the justifications for violence offered by the religious are as rigorous and logically well-formed as those offered by atheists. However, the religious have more scope to develop justifications for violence than do atheists, because the religious can employ premises grounded in the metaphysics of religious worldviews, which are unavailable to atheists, in arguments for the conclusion that particular acts of violence are justified. Of course the justifications on offer will not be acceptable to those who do not accept the required metaphysical presuppositions. Nor will they be acceptable to pacifists, who reject the secular justifications for violence that are currently accorded mainstream acceptance, such as the appeal to a right to self-defense, as a justification for violence.

The religions of the world are extremely diverse (Norenzayan 2016). So, it might be thought that that there will be a great variety of justifications for violence offered that appeal to religion and that any attempt to categorize these will be of limited value. However, in *The Justification of Religious Violence* (Clarke 2014), I argue that the vast majority of appeals to religion to justify violence can be categorized into three types. First, there are appeals to the need to act violently in the context of a “cosmic war.” Second, there are appeals to the afterlife. Third, there are appeals to “sacred values.” We’ll now consider each of these in turn.

Cosmic War

It is commonly accepted in ordinary secular morality that the military forces of a country which possesses a “just cause,” such as a need to defend their country against an unjust attack, are entitled to participate in a just war (Coady 2008).

Followers of many different religions, including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Manicheanism and Zoroastrianism, construe the course of human history as being caught up in a great struggle between a supreme good supernatural being, such as God, and a supreme evil supernatural being, such as Satan (Clarke 2014: 103–104). A common theme amongst those who see human history as a part of a larger cosmic struggle, is that a final decisive battle will soon be upon us and that humans are morally required to do what they can, to contribute to the final victory of good over evil, in this soon-to-come battle (Selengut 2003, pp. 95–139). People who view the world this way often stress the deviousness of the enemy that they face and are prone to construe actions which others consider to be unremarkable, as evidence of the machinations of a supreme evil being.

The mass suicide of Jim Jones and 900 of his followers, who were members of the “People’s Temple” was the culmination of series of events that came to a head in 1978, when Californian Congressman Leo Ryan visited the People’s Temple commune in Jonestown, Guyana. Ryan went there to investigate allegations of kidnapping and child abuse made against the People’s Temple. Despite these allegations, Ryan, and the journalists who accompanied him, formed a mostly favorable impression of the commune (Smith 1999, p. 376). However, at the conclusion of the trip, Ryan, and four other people who were with him, were assassinated by members of the People’s Temple (Moore 2011, pp. 97–100). Jones and his followers had become convinced that the US government was under the control of the Antichrist and they construed Ryan’s visit as an indication that the People’s Temple was about to be attacked by the forces of the Antichrist. They understood their mass suicide as an act of “revolutionary suicide,” which, they believed, would help to overcome the forces of the Antichrist and also advance the cause of international socialism (Chidester 1988, pp. 129–159).

The killing of five people who had not acted violently towards anyone would not ordinarily be considered to be justifiable. The key to developing a religious justification for this act was to see these apparently innocent people as servants of an evil supernatural being who posed an imminent threat to humanity. It is unclear whether or not suicide requires justification when it is freely chosen by rational adults (Clarke 2014, p. 127). However, the mass suicide at Jonestown involved the killing of many infants and children, who were far too young to consent to participate in a mass suicide, and who were effectively murdered by their parents and other guardians. Their killing would be considered unjustifiable by everyone who was not a member of the People’s Temple. From the point of view of a devout member of the People’s Temple though, their killing was justifiable because it was expected to help overcome the forces of the Antichrist and advance the cause of international socialism; and because the alternatives were for them to be killed in an imminent attack by the forces of the Antichrist, or to be co-opted into those forces.

The Afterlife

Many, but not all religions recognize an afterlife. In ordinary salvific religions, including most variants of Christianity and Islam, God is supposed to reward those who have lived a morally good life with eternal happiness in heaven. God is also supposed to punish

those who have lived a bad life with eternal suffering in hell. Ordinary Buddhists and Hindus also believe in an afterlife. They believe that we are subjected to a series of reincarnations and that our future reincarnations are a consequence of accumulated karma. If we live a morally good life, we accumulate good karma which causes us to have a desirable reincarnation. If we lead an immoral life, we accumulate bad karma and this causes us to have an undesirable reincarnation (Wadia (1965).

Afterlife beliefs have featured in many of the justifications for violence offered by the religious. Aquinas held that it is sometimes justifiable to put heretics to death. Before the Second Vatican Council of 1962–1965 the Catholic Church's official position was that only Catholics are eligible for salvation. People who preached heretical doctrines posed a threat to the salvation of good Catholics, who might be persuaded to abandon orthodox Catholic doctrine in favor of heretical doctrines. According to pre-Second Vatican Council Catholics, this would guarantee that they would be denied entry into heaven and be punished with eternal suffering in hell instead. Aquinas argued that it was justifiable to execute heretics, rather than allow ordinary gullible people to be exposed to the threat to their eternal happiness posed by heresies (Clarke 2012). This is a straightforward consequentialist justification for violence, which seems very powerful, if traditional Catholic views of salvation are accepted. The potential (eternal) harms involved in allowing heresies to be promulgated far outweigh the (temporary) harms involved in executing the occasional heretic (Clarke 2012).

Buddhism has a reputation in the West as a peaceful religion, but Buddhists have often behaved violently, and have often sought to justify violence by appealing to the doctrine of karma (Clarke 2014, pp. 123–126). Western audiences were very surprised, in 2011, when the Dalai Lama effectively endorsed the assassination of Osama bin Laden by US Special Forces. However, the Dalai Lama was not saying anything that would sound controversial to Buddhists who were familiar with the “compassionate killing” justification of violence. This line of justification has it that killing can be justified when the person killed receives karmic benefits as a result (Jenkins 2010, pp. 67–70). It is widely believed that Osama bin Laden led a morally bad life. Given his public statements, as well as his actions, in the lead-up to his death, there is every reason to suppose that he would have continued to lead a bad life, had he lived longer. As things stand, according to mainstream Buddhists and Hindus, we can expect bin Laden to receive an unfortunate reincarnation. But if bin Laden were to have lived longer he would have accumulated even more bad karma and we would expect him to receive an even more unfortunate reincarnation. So, if we accept the doctrine of karma and the metaphysics that this involves, as well as the compassionate killing line of justification for violence, the act of assassinating bin Laden can be understood as justifiable, because it provides bin Laden with karmic benefits (Clarke 2014, p. 124).

Sacred Values

Sacred values, or “protected values” have become a subject of increasing interest in psychology, cognitive science, and negotiation studies over the past two decades (Atran 2010; Baron and Spranca 1997). The key feature of sacred values that scholars

working on them identify, which differentiates them from non-sacred values, is that people who hold sacred values will never directly compromise them, regardless of the inducements on offer.⁶ Indeed, the mere suggestion that they might even consider compromising a sacred value is liable to be taken by them as a suggestion that their stated belief in that sacred value is insincere – a suggestion which can provoke outrage and lead them to act violently (Tetlock 2003, pp. 320–321). When a group of Palestinian students, who regarded Muslim control of East Jerusalem (Al-Quds) as a sacred right, were asked if they would consider agreeing to renounce that sacred right, as a part of a peace deal with Israel, they became angry. When another group of Palestinian students, who also regarded Muslim control of East Jerusalem (Al-Quds) as a sacred right, were asked to consider a “sweetened” deal, according to which Israel would pay each Palestinian family US\$1000 per year for ten years, they became even angrier than the first group and more likely to support violence than they would be otherwise (Ginges et al. 2007).

Sacred values can play a key role in justifying religious violence. Religious Zionists consider the Land of Israel to be sacred because, they believe, it was given to the Jewish people by God in the Abrahamic covenant. In 1995, a religious Zionist, Yigal Amir, assassinated the prime minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin. Amir considered that this was a justified killing, because Rabin was attempting to cede control of parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to an interim Palestinian government, as a part of a peace deal. Amir objected to the ceding of control of sacred territory. From his religious Zionist point of view, the Jewish people had a clear duty to obey God and govern the territory he had placed under their control. By attempting to cede some of this territory to the Palestinians, Rabin was also attempting to violate a duty that the Jewish people held to God. As a devout Zionist, Amir believed that he was morally required to prevent the violation of this duty. He further believed that he was justified in using lethal force to prevent its violation (Stern 2003, pp. 90–92).

Sacred values are sometimes held for secular reasons. The National Rifle Association hold that the right of Americans to bear arms is a sacred right and should never be given up, regardless of the inducements that might be on offer (Marietta 2008). Many Iranians assert that Iran has a sacred right to a nuclear energy program which should never be compromised (Dehghani et al. 2009). The justifications on offer for these appeals to sacred values appear to be grounded in assertions about the respective national characteristics and destinies of the American and Iranian peoples.

Religious appeals to sacred values are far more common than secular appeals and the justifications on offer for appeals to sacred values that are grounded in religion are more compelling, to those who accept the relevant metaphysics, than are secular appeals. The assertion that God has given the Land of Israel to the Jewish people is backed up by holy scripture (Gen. 15: 18–21). It is very clear, to those who construe the relationship between God and humans in the way that that relationship is ordinarily understood in the Abrahamic religions, that no one should ignore the word of God. God is our superior in every way. He is perfect and we are flawed. By contrast, the belief that Americans are the sort of people who cannot be alienated from their right to bear arms is vague and unexplanatory. It is unclear why and how Americans differ from other

people, such that they have a peculiar sacred right, which other people appear to lack. The American right to bear arms is recognized in the Second Amendment to the US constitution, as is frequently pointed out by representatives of the National Rifle Association. But the Second Amendment was formulated by humans, rather than God, so it lacks the authority of holy scripture.

The religious have means to justify violence, which are either unavailable to atheists, such as appeals to cosmic war and to the afterlife, or only available to atheists in a limited form, as we saw in the discussion of appeals to sacred values to justify violence. The religious are also able to avail themselves of all of the justifications of violence that are available to atheists. So the religious have more ways of justifying violence available to them than do atheists. It is tempting to conclude, that because the religious have more conceptual resources available to them, if they wish to justify violence, than do atheists, that they will end up causing more violence than do atheists. But this is speculative reasoning. The religious may be better able to justify violence than atheists, but it does not follow from this premise that they will end up justifying more acts of violence than do atheists and it does not follow that they will end up causing more violence than atheists. A further point that needs to be borne in mind is that the religious have conceptual resources to draw on, which atheists lack, that can help them to oppose violence. They can draw on pacifist religious doctrines, such as the Christian pacifist theologies of Hauerwas (1984) and Yoder (1994). They can also draw on religious doctrines that obviate the need for violent action. For example, they can assert that violent human action is unnecessary because God can be trusted to ensure that history unfolds in a way that results in the best outcomes for us, without the need for us to take violent action (Clarke 2014, p. 8).

Concluding Remarks

As we have seen, it is at present unclear whether or not religion is an overall cause of violence. Currently available evidence does not allow us to decide. In addition to considering evidence that directly relates religion to violence, we have considered indirect relationships between violence. We considered the relationship between religion and morality and asked whether this had consequences for the relationship between religion and violence. We also considered the relationships between religion, tolerance, and intolerance, with the same question in mind. Finally, we argued that religion offered additional conceptual resources to those who wish to justify violence and asked whether or not access to these additional conceptual resources led to the religious causing more violence than do atheists. None of these lines of argument led to a decisive conclusion about the relationship between religion and violence. However, none are dead ends either. We need to undertake more research so as to better understand the ways in which religion shapes our moral reasoning, the ways in which it influences our propensity to tolerate – or be intolerant of – the behavior of others, and to better understand how we are inclined to use the justificatory resources that religion provides. With more information about these topics in hand we will be better placed to understand the relationship between religion and violence.

Notes

- 1 For discussion of the various ways in which religion can be used to help prevent violence, see Appleby (2000).
- 2 For discussion of the history of the Spanish Inquisition, see Perez (2006).
- 3 Do they also distrust agnostics? Empirical work on this topic does not usually draw distinctions between atheists and agnostics. For our purposes this distinction will not matter. The term “atheist” as it is used in this chapter should be understood to be inclusive of the non-religious who identify as agnostics.
- 4 Interestingly, distrust of atheists decreases significantly in well-ordered societies and in peaceful societies (Norenzayan and Gervais 2015).
- 5 There have been various attempts to refine the divine command theory, so that it may be able to address the Euthyphro problem (Gensler 2016, pp. 29–54).
- 6 Nevertheless, it may be possible to reach compromises with those who hold sacred values by inducing them to “reframe” those values (Atran 2010).

References

- Barrett, J. (2004) *Why Would Anyone Believe in God?* Walnut Creek: AltaMira. Press.
- Batson, D., and Ventis, W. (1982) *The Religious Experience: A Social-Psychological Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bering, J., and Johnson, D. (2005) “Oh Lord ... you perceive my thoughts from afar: Recursiveness and the evolution of supernatural agency.” *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 5: 118–142.
- Boehm, C. (2012) *Moral Origins: The Evolution of Virtue, Altruism, and Shame*. New York: Basic Books.
- Boyer, P. (2001) *Religion Explained*. London: Random House.
- Bullock, A. (1952) *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*. London: Odhams.
- Cavanaugh, W. (2009) *The Myth of Religious Violence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Chidester, D. (1988) *Salvation and Suicide: An Interpretation of Jim Jones, the People's Temple and Jonestown*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Clarke, S. (2012) “Coercion, consequence and salvation,” in Y. Nagasawa (ed.) *Scientific Approaches to the Philosophy of Religion*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 205–223.
- Clarke, S. (2014) *The Justification of Religious Violence*. Malden: Wiley Blackwell.
- Clarke, S., Powell, R., and Savulescu, J. (eds.) (2013) *Religion, Intolerance and Conflict: A Scientific and Conceptual Investigation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Coady, C. (2008) *Morality and Political Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cohen, A. (2004) “What toleration is.” *Ethics* 115: 68–95.
- Dawkins, R. (2001) “Religion’s misguided missiles.” *The Guardian*, 15 September.
- Dawkins, R. (2006) *The God Delusion*. London: Bantam Press.
- Dehghani, M., Iliev, R., Sachdeva, S., Atran, S., Ginges, J. and Medin, D. (2009) “Emerging sacred values: Iran’s nuclear program.” *Judgment and Decision Making* 4: 930–933.
- Edgell, P., Gerteis, J., and Hartmann, D. (2006). “Atheists as ‘Other’: Moral boundaries and cultural membership in American society.” *American Sociological Review* 71: 211–234.
- Gensler, H. (2016) *Ethics and Religion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Gervais, W., and Norenzayan, A. (2013) “Religion and the origins of anti-atheist prejudice,” in S. Clarke, R. Powell, and J. Savulescu (eds.) *Religion, Intolerance and Conflict: A Scientific and Conceptual Investigation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 126–145.

- Ginges, J., Atran, S., Medin, D. and Shihaki, K. (2007) "Sacred bounds on rational resolution of conflict." *PNAS*, 104: 7357–7360.
- Haidt, J. (2012) *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion*. New York: Pantheon/Knopf.
- Hastings, J. (2009) *Catholicism and the Roots of Nazism: Religious Identity and National Socialism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hauerwas, S. (1984) *Should War be Eliminated: Philosophical and Theological Investigations*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press.
- Henrich, J. (2009) "The evolution of costly displays, cooperation and religion: Credibility enhancing displays and their implications for cultural evolution." *Evolution and Human Behaviour* 30: 244–260.
- Hewstone, M., Rubin, M., and Willis, H. (2002) "Intergroup bias." *Annual Review of Psychology* 53: 575–604.
- Johnson, D. (2016) *God is Watching You: How the Fear of God Made Us Human*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Johnson, D., and Reeve, Z. (2013) "The virtues of intolerance: Is religion an adaptation for war?" in S. Clarke, R. Powell, and J. Savulescu (eds.) *Religion, Intolerance and Conflict: A Scientific and Conceptual Investigation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 67–87.
- Juergensmeyer, M. (2003) *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 3rd edn. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kimball, C. (2008) *When Religion Becomes Evil: Five Warning Signs*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Kirkpatrick, C. (1949) *Religion and humanitarianism: A study of institutional implications*. Psychological Monographs, 63/304. Washington: American Psychological Association.
- Lafont, C. (2017) "Citizens in robes: The place of religion in constitutional democracies." *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 43: 453–464.
- Marietta, M. (2008) "From my cold dead hands: Democratic consequences of sacred rhetoric." *Journal of Politics* 70: 767–779.
- Moore, R. (2011) "Narrative of persecution, suffering and martyrdom: Violence in People's Temple and Jonestown," in J. Lewis (ed.) *Violence and New Religious Movements*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 95–111.
- Needham, P. (2002) "The discovery that water is H₂O," *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 16: 205–226.
- Norenzayan, A. (2013) *Big Gods: How Religion Transformed Cooperation and Conflict*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Norenzayan, A. (2016) "Theodiversity." *Annual Review of Psychology* 67: 465–488.
- Norenzayan, A., and Gervais, W. (2015) "Secular rule of law eroded believers' political intolerance of atheists." *Religion, Brain and Behaviour* 5: 3–14.
- Norris, P., and Inglehart, R. (2011) *Sacred and secular*, 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Perez, J. (2006) *The Spanish Inquisition: A History*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Plato (2015) *The Euthyphro*, trans. Benjamin Jowett. Charleton: CreateSpace.
- Powell, R., and Clarke, S. (2012) "Religion as an evolutionary by-product: A critique of the standard model." *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 63: 457–486.
- Selengut, C. (2003) *Sacred Fury: Understanding Religious Violence*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.
- Smith, J. (1999) "The devil in Mr. Jones," in R. McCutcheon (ed.) *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion*. London: Cassell, pp. 370–389.
- Sosis, R. (2005) "Does religion promote trust? The role of signalling, reputation, and punishment." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 1: 1–30.
- Stern, J. (2003) *Terror in the Name of God*. New York: HarperCollins.

- Stouffer, S. (1955) *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties*. New York: Doubleday.
- Tan, J., and Vogel, C. (2008) "Religion and trust: An experimental study." *Journal of Economic Psychology* 29: 832–848.
- Tetlock, P. (2003) "Thinking the unthinkable: Sacred values and taboo cognitions." *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 7: 320–324.
- Wadia, A. (1965) "Philosophical implications of the doctrine of karma." *Philosophy East and West* 15: 145–152.
- Ward, K. (2006) *Is Religion Dangerous?* Oxford: Lion Hudson.
- Yoder, J. (1994) *The Politics of Jesus*, 2nd edn. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Zuckerman, P. (2014) *Living the Secular Life* New York: Penguin.

Further Reading

- Appleby (2000) – a classic study of the complicated relationship between religion and violence, with a focus on the possibility of using religion to enable peacebuilding;
- Atran (2010)—in depth examination of contemporary religiously inspired terrorists, by a leading anthropologist, grounded on rigorous field-based research;
- Avalos (2005)—examination of the relationship between scripture and religiously inspired violence by a professor of religious studies;
- Boyer (2001)—clear exposition of many of the core ideas of the cognitive science of religion by one of the leading figure in the field;
- Clarke (2014)—examination of the logical structure of arguments used to justifying violence by appeal to religion;
- Dawkins (2006)—sustained criticism of religion by the best known of the 'new atheists'; Juergensmeyer (2003)—study of religiously inspired violence in the contemporary world by a leading sociologist; Norenzayan (2013)—an influential argument for the importance of belief in supernatural punishment for the evolution of religion and the reshaping of inter and intra-group relations; Norris and Inglehart (2011)—a sustained discussion of the place of religion in the modern world, with a focus on patterns of secularization; and Ward (2006)—readable defense of mainstream religions, especially Christianity, against the charge that they promote violence.

Church and State

CRISTINA LAFONT

The separation of church and state is generally taken to be a requirement of constitutional democracies. However, there is little agreement on its precise meaning. In fact, democratic countries have developed quite different (even mutually incompatible) institutional arrangements in response to the ideal of separation.¹ At a minimum, the separation of church and state rules out theocracy as a legitimate system of government. Under this very general understanding, the state must be secular in that it neither officially confers preferential status on a particular religion nor uses its powers to impose religious beliefs and practices upon its citizens against their will.² There is little disagreement that theocracies are incompatible with the democratic ideal of treating all citizens as free and equal. However, difficulties arise with more ambitious interpretations of the ideal of separation.

Political Justification and the Religious–Secular Distinction

Some liberal conceptions of democratic legitimacy interpret the ideal of separation such that religious beliefs and reasons should be excluded from political justification. According to the liberal criterion of democratic legitimacy, citizens ought to justify the imposition of coercive policies on one another with reasons that everyone can reasonably accept.³ Only in this way can citizens see themselves not just as subject to the law but as authors of the law, as the democratic ideal of popular sovereignty requires. Since religious reasons are not generally acceptable to secular citizens and citizens of different faiths as a legitimate basis for coercion, endorsing this criterion entails the claim that, for the purposes of political justification, public reasons should take priority over religious considerations.⁴ This claim is often interpreted as requiring the exclusion of religious beliefs and reasons from the public justification of coercive policies (e.g., see Audi 2000). This exclusivist view raises fears that a commitment to liberal democracy

is suitable only for secular citizens and religious citizens who are practical atheists – that is, who are willing and able to ignore their religious beliefs in forming their political convictions.⁵ Genuinely religious citizens may be tolerated, perhaps even accommodated, but not politically integrated as equals. Fears that democracy and secularism (or practical atheism) are necessarily connected in this way have led some critics of liberalism to the conclusion that liberal democratic institutions are ultimately incompatible with traditional religious forms of life.⁶ But is this fear justified? Is there an internal connection between liberal democracy and secular worldviews? In other words, is democracy only for (practical or theoretical) atheists?

Liberal critics of the exclusivist view give a negative answer to these questions. They argue that singling out religion for exclusion from political justification is unfair to religious citizens and incompatible with the democratic ideal of treating all citizens as free and equal.⁷ In their opinion, giving equal consideration to everyone's views is the only way to grant equal treatment to all citizens. This, in turn, requires the inclusion of religious reasons on equal footing with secular reasons in political deliberation.⁸ However, such a proposal effectively relinquishes the liberal criterion of democratic legitimacy. Indeed, the inclusivist model would see nothing wrong with religious citizens basing their political decisions on exclusively religious reasons. If they were in the majority they would thereby be able to impose coercive policies on other citizens without any obligation to give them reasons that they can reasonably accept. Thus, the inclusivist model raises the same fears as the exclusivist model but with negative consequences for different groups of citizens. The model implies that a commitment to democracy may be suitable only for members of religious majorities. For, on such a model, secular citizens and citizens of minority faiths would be subject to the law yet, contrary to what the democratic ideal of self-government requires, they would not be able to see themselves as authors of the law. These citizens may be tolerated, perhaps even accommodated, but not politically integrated as equals. Needless to say, if there is no hope that secular and religious citizens of different faiths can equally endorse (and identify with) democratic institutions, then the future of democracy within pluralist societies is seriously threatened.

Against this negative conclusion, I think that there are good reasons to question the assumption of a direct connection between a commitment to democracy, on the one hand, and the secular or religious identity of citizens, on the other. First of all, the values of freedom and equality that are essential to the democratic ideal of self-government are neither religious nor secular values. They are political values that can be endorsed (or rejected) from within many different comprehensive doctrines, whether secular or religious. There is some empirical evidence in favor of this claim. Antidemocratic extremist groups in current democratic societies attract secular citizens just as much as religious ones. Certainly, a citizen's secular identity is not a reliable indicator of holding democratic political views.⁹ But if the relevant predictor of commitment to democratic principles is the *political* identity of citizens and not their *religious* or *secular* identity, it seems both misguided (as well as counterproductive for the purposes of strengthening such a commitment) to strongly tie an account of democratic legitimacy to the religious or secular identity of citizens.¹⁰

Indeed, placing central importance upon the religious–secular distinction in an account of democratic legitimacy is both unhelpful and misleading.¹¹

Although religious reasons may be taken to be a paradigmatic case of reasons that are not generally acceptable to secular citizens and citizens of different faiths, it does not follow that secular reasons can be seen as any more or less generally acceptable than religious reasons *simply in virtue of being secular*.¹² Non-religious reasons that are based on contentious comprehensive doctrines and conceptions of the good cannot be expected to be generally acceptable to all citizens as a legitimate basis for coercion. Similarly, although a theocratic state might be a paradigmatic example of a political system that is incompatible with constitutional democracy, this does not mean that a secular state should automatically be seen as any more or less democratic than a theocracy simply in virtue of being secular.¹³ North Korea is a secular state but certainly not a democracy. But if the religious–secular distinction neither captures the features that distinguish democratic from non-democratic states nor those that distinguish legitimate from illegitimate reasons when it comes to justifying state coercion within democratic societies, then placing central importance on such a distinction in an account of political justification and democratic legitimacy is misleading at best. In order to motivate the abandonment of this detrimental conceptual framework, I shall briefly sketch an alternative conception of political justification and democratic legitimacy that does not rely on the religious–secular distinction (in what follows I draw from Lafont 2017).

Political Justification Beyond the Religious-Secular Distinction

The conception of political justification that I defend is based on a specific interpretation of three core claims that all conceptions of public reason share. Namely, that (i) there is a set of reasons that are generally *acceptable to all* democratic citizens, that (ii) these reasons are *independent from* religious or otherwise comprehensive doctrines, and that (iii) they ought to have *priority* in determining coercive policies.¹⁴ A defense of the first claim requires identifying reasons and arguments of a certain kind that all democratic citizens, whether religious or secular, can reasonably accept ought to have priority for justifying coercive policies. However, I find the characterization of public reasons as “secular” reasons particularly unhelpful. This characterization is based on the contentious assumption that secular reasons share some special epistemic properties (such as being “accessible,” “shareable,” “intelligible,” etc.) that religious reasons necessarily lack.¹⁵ Instead, my proposal follows Rawls (1993; 1999) in identifying public reasons as “properly political” reasons. These are reasons based on those political values and ideals that are the very condition of possibility for a democracy: the ideal of treating citizens as free and equal, and of society as a fair scheme of cooperation, which find expression in the constitutional principles to which citizens are bound in liberal democracies. These democratic values and principles embedded in the institutions of constitutional democracies provide a reservoir of generally acceptable reasons from which all citizens can draw to publicly justify the coercive policies they endorse to their fellow citizens (see Rawls 1993, pp. 212–254; Rawls 1999).

An advantage of the *political* interpretation of the content of public reasons is that it does not face the kind of skeptical doubts that plague *epistemic* interpretations. Since

democratic citizens are precisely the citizens committed to the values and principles of constitutional democracies, it is platitudinous to claim that they share these reasons or that they find them generally acceptable. The standard objection is not that this set of reasons does not exist, but rather that the set is too thin to provide a sufficient basis for determining which coercive policies are justified. However, in contrast to Rawls, my proposal is not committed to the “completeness of public reason.”¹⁶ To claim that public reasons take priority for the purposes of justifying coercive policies is not the same as the claim that public reasons alone must be sufficient to provide such justification or that they must be the only reasons that citizens can legitimately appeal to for that purpose. Perhaps the best way to explain the difference is by focusing on the second claim mentioned above, namely, that public reasons are *independent from* religious (or otherwise comprehensive) doctrines.

This claim is usually cashed out in terms of “neutrality” and, as such, it has been the target of the most vigorous criticisms of the public reason view.¹⁷ However, it is important to see why this is so. If, following Rawls, one endorses the completeness of public reason, namely, the view that there is a set of reasons shared by all democratic citizens that are sufficient to determine all or nearly all policies that touch upon constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice, then the claim that this set of reasons is independent from all religious or otherwise comprehensive conceptions of the good becomes quite problematic. For it suggests that one could determine the policies that ought to be enforced without any consideration whatsoever as to why they are good. That can’t be right. However, notice that what creates the problem is the assumption of “sufficiency” and not the assumption of “independence.”. The problem is not that public reasons are indistinguishable from reasons that are religious or otherwise comprehensive, but rather that the latter cannot be excluded from the set of reasons sufficient to determine the policies that ought to be enforced. Without the assumption of sufficiency, however, all that is needed to justify the claim that public reasons are independent from other types of reasons is the capacity to intuitively distinguish them for the purposes at hand.

My interpretation of the independence claim is based on the intuitive contrast between, on the one hand, reasons and arguments that aim to show whether or not some specific policy is good, desirable, beneficial, valuable, and so on, and, on the other, reasons and arguments that aim to show whether or not the policy in question is compatible with the equal protection of the fundamental rights of all citizens. This contrast can be understood as a specific case of a more general distinction between *the rationale that motivates a practice* and its *justification*. This is a familiar contrast. The reason why people marry, travel, or go to the movies is because they find these practices good, valuable, desirable, or whatever the case may be. However, this does not yet tell us whether or under which conditions these practices are justified. For present purposes, we can interpret the contrast in terms of Rawls’s catchy characterization of the difference between the right and the good: “the right draws the limit; the good shows the point” (Rawls 2000, p. 231).

Notice that this way of understanding the logical independence between both types of reasons does not involve any problematic assumption of neutrality. Indeed, if we interpret the claim of independence in this way, it becomes clear that arguments and

reasons geared to show the *point* or rationale of a given practice cannot be “neutral” or independent of conceptions of the good, be they religious or secular, since their aim is to show why the practice in question is good – that is, valuable, important, beneficial, and so on. It seems clear that a crucial element of advocating for the adoption of a specific policy is to offer arguments and reasons that purport to show why the practices the policy regulates are good, worth protecting, or whatever the case may be. However, it seems equally clear that offering these kinds of arguments or reasons may not be enough to *justify* the adoption of the policy in question. For its *justification* may also depend on other kinds of considerations or constraints, such as whether it is compatible with other practices, whether its benefits and burdens can be fairly distributed, whether it would excessively constrain important rights and freedoms, whether it would have discriminatory effects, and so on. This indicates a sense in which the latter considerations may have *constraining priority* over the former without in any way annulling their relevance and import. Take the example of same-sex marriage: LGBT citizens want to be able to marry because of the value of marriage – that is, because they find the institution good, beneficial, desirable, or whatever the case may be. Certainly, no one wants to marry for the sake of freedom and equality. However, this does not mean that equal treatment or protection of freedom are not important considerations, perhaps even decisive ones, for justifying whether same-sex marriage should be permitted or its ban overruled as unconstitutional.

This intuitive distinction indicates how the *priority of public reasons* can be defended without the additional burden of a commitment to neutrality. In contrast to proposals that either exclude religious or otherwise comprehensive views from public debate or that include them without any restrictions, my proposal articulates a policy of mutual accountability that imposes the same deliberative rights and obligations upon all democratic citizens.¹⁸ This proposal recognizes the right of all democratic citizens to adopt their own cognitive stance, whether religious or secular, in public political debates without giving up on the democratic obligation to justify the coercive policies with which all citizens must comply by providing reasons that are acceptable to everyone.

According to the mutual accountability proviso I defend, citizens who participate in political advocacy can appeal to whatever reasons they wish in support of the policies they favor, provided they are prepared to show – against objections – that these policies are compatible with the democratic commitment to treat all citizens as free and equal, and can therefore be reasonably accepted by everyone. In order to fulfill this democratic obligation, citizens must be willing to engage in an argument on the compatibility of their favored policies with the equal protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of all citizens, and they must be willing to accept the outcome of *that* argument as decisive in settling the question of whether these policies can be legitimately enforced. Objections to the compatibility of such policies with the equal protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of all citizens must be (i) properly addressed in public debate, and (i) defeated with compelling arguments before citizens’ support (or vote) for their enforcement can be considered legitimate.

It is in virtue of this democratic obligation that public reasons have *constraining priority*. They are the only reasons towards which no one can remain indifferent in their political advocacy. Whereas public reasons need not be the source from which a

rationale in support of coercive policies must be crafted, they are the kind of reasons that cannot be ignored, disregarded, or simply overridden once citizens bring them into public deliberation. They are the reasons that must be addressed and properly scrutinized in public debate if they are offered as objections to the coercive policies under discussion. Since citizens of a constitutional democracy are committed to the equal protection of all citizens' basic rights it is perfectly appropriate for them to call each other to account regarding the kind of reasons that they are considering or ignoring while advocating for the policies they favor, as this *allows them to establish whether or not these reasons are compatible with maintaining that commitment*. Granted, the shared commitment does not suffice to guarantee *agreement*. But it does give rise to forms of *argumentative entanglement* that allow members of a political community to transform public opinion over time by their continuous efforts to enlist the force of the better argument to their cause and change each other's minds.

Political Justification from an Institutional Perspective

In constitutional democracies with judicial review, the right to legal contestation guarantees that all citizens can, on their own initiative, open or reopen a deliberative process in which reasons and justifications geared to show the constitutionality of a contested policy are made publicly available, such that they can be scrutinized and challenged with counter-arguments that might lead public opinion to be transformed and prior decisions to be overturned. The right of citizens to question the constitutionality of any policy or statute by initiating legal challenges allows them to *structure* public debate on the policy in question as a debate about fundamental rights and therefore as a debate in which the priority of public reasons (with its corresponding standards of scrutiny) must be respected. They can do so even if such structuring did not seem antecedently plausible to the rest of the citizenry, perhaps because they had framed it in other terms or because they had failed to foresee the impact that the policy would have on the fundamental rights of certain citizens. Obviously, a claim that a contested statute violates a fundamental right may turn out to be mistaken, and litigants may not be able to change a prior decision or public opinion. But, even in such a case, they still have the right to receive an explicit reasoned justification about why exactly the statute in question does not violate their rights and why it is therefore compatible with treating them as free and equal. For those who continue to disagree, this reasoned justification in turn highlights the reasons, arguments, and evidence that they would need to more effectively challenge in order to convince the majority of citizens to change their opinion on the matter.

From this perspective, the right to legal contestation guarantees all citizens that their communicative power, their ability to trigger political deliberation on issues of fundamental rights, will not fall below some unacceptable minimum regardless of how unpopular or idiosyncratic their views may seem to other citizens. The conception of public justification as mutual accountability that I defend emphasizes the contribution that structuring political debates in accordance with the priority of public reasons (and its corresponding standards of scrutiny) makes to the legitimacy of enforcing contested policies. It gives rise

to forms of argumentative entanglement that allow members of a political community to gain traction within each other's views and transform them over time.

Although examples are always problematic, the development of the debate on same-sex marriage in the United States offers a good illustration here. For decades the issue was treated in public debate as turning mainly on the meaning of marriage. On that question, there was widespread agreement that marriage is between a man and a woman. However, once political initiatives for state constitutional amendments to ban same-sex marriage became part of the political agenda, and citizens legally contested such initiatives in the courts, the focus of public deliberation shifted from an ethical and religious debate on the meaning of marriage to a constitutional debate on equal treatment and fundamental rights. Judicial review of the constitutionality of state bans on same-sex marriage led public debate to treat the issue as a matter of fundamental rights. Quite surprisingly, once the debate became structured in that way, a major shift in public opinion took place in favor of same-sex marriage. Although this development is a complex empirical issue, it is hard to avoid the impression that once the debate became a constitutional debate, many of the citizens who were against same-sex marriage on the basis of their religious or otherwise comprehensive views about the meaning of marriage could not find convincing reasons to justify unequal treatment under the law, and that they therefore changed their minds *about whether it should be legal*. There are good reasons to assume that without the extra political power that the right to legal contestation granted litigants, such that they could *structure* the political debate as a constitutional debate about fundamental rights, the “unfettered” public debate would have continued to turn exclusively on religious and ethical questions about which citizens strongly disagree. As a consequence, the comprehensive views of the majority regarding the meaning of marriage would have continued to dictate policy.

By contrast, once the public debate became framed in constitutional terms the standards of scrutiny characteristic of judicial review (e.g., identifying legitimate government interests, investigating the proportionality of the means, weighing the empirical evidence, etc.) allowed litigants to get traction within and ultimately transform the views of the majority. Indeed, whereas it is unclear what standard of scrutiny could be used to resolve religious and ethical debates over the meaning of marriage amongst citizens holding different comprehensive views, it is quite clear that the standards of scrutiny appropriate for a constitutional debate give rise to forms of argumentative entanglement that allow citizens to call each other to account, gather and weigh factual evidence for and against proposals, and influence one another's views over time as a consequence. In the example of the debate over same-sex marriage, the review process required its opponents to identify legitimate government interests to justify the ban. Once such interests were publicly identified (e.g., protecting the health and welfare of children, fostering procreation within a marital setting, etc.) the debate began to turn on questions for which factual evidence could be decisive in settling the answer (e.g., statistical evidence about the welfare of children raised in same-sex couples' households, the existence of married couples unable to procreate, etc.) But let me briefly focus on a different example that may help address the worry I mentioned earlier that acceptance of the liberal criterion of democratic legitimacy and the priority of public reason threatens religious forms of life.

The Priority of Public Reasons and Religious Forms of Life

Current debates in European countries on whether to ban the Islamic headscarf from public places seem to be following a very similar path. These debates have mainly focused on the meaning of the Islamic headscarf. On that question there are deep disagreements. Some see it is a symbol of gender inequality, others as a mark of cultural identity, and yet others as having a strongly religious significance. Even those who agree on its religious significance draw very different political conclusions. For some, it justifies the obligation of Muslim women to wear it, whereas for others it justifies the need to ban it in order to prevent foreign religious values from bleeding into or displacing the Christian values of European countries. However, since political initiatives to ban the Islamic headscarf from public places became part of the political agenda in most European countries and citizens began to legally contest such initiatives in the courts, the focus of the debate has started to shift from a debate on the cultural and religious meaning of wearing the headscarf to a debate on fundamental rights, equal treatment, and non-discrimination.

This example is particularly interesting because it casts some doubt upon the liberal critics' assumption that the priority of public reasons is unfair to religious citizens and threatens religious forms of life in democratic societies. This view fails to appreciate that the priority of public reasons over comprehensive secular reasons can offer strong protections to religious forms of life. As mentioned above, many citizens argue in favor of banning the Islamic headscarf from public places by appealing to secular reasons concerning gender equality. Now, it might seem that precisely because their advocacy for the ban draws on the value of equality, it is based on properly political reasons and therefore meets the "priority of public reasons" test. But here lies an illicit conflation. For such a claim would seem to imply that secular reasons, whatever they may be, that purport to explain why the practice of wearing the Islamic scarf is bad are at the same time both appropriate and sufficient for the justification of something entirely different, namely, the imposition of coercion on others who have the right to be treated as equals.¹⁹ The priority of public reasons over comprehensive reasons, whether religious or secular, that is implicit in constitutional review offers an effective protection against this conflation. Indeed, judicial review of the constitutionality of the ban of Islamic headscarves from public places in European countries is slowly shifting the focus of the debate from the meaning and rationale of the practice of wearing the headscarf to the justification for its prohibition. The recent ruling of Germany's highest court that the ban on teachers wearing headscarves is not compatible with religious freedom and that excepting Christian symbols from the ban constitutes religious discrimination and is therefore unconstitutional is helping to structure public political debates in accordance with the priority of public reasons and the duty of mutual accountability.²⁰ Here again there are good reasons to assume that without the extra political power that the right to legal contestation grants litigants, such that they might be able to *structure* the political debate as a constitutional debate about fundamental rights and freedoms, the "unfettered" public debate would continue to turn on religious and secular comprehensive views about which citizens strongly disagree. As a consequence, the comprehensive secular views of the majority about the meaning of the Islamic headscarf would simply continue to dictate policy in European countries.

These examples reveal an important motivation behind the debate about the kinds of reasons that citizens should use to justify coercive policies. It is the danger that a majority could, simply on the basis of their *comprehensive* beliefs, whether religious or secular, illicitly restrict the fundamental rights and freedoms of their fellow citizens. However, framing the problem in such anti-majoritarian terms may give the mistaken impression that a commitment to public reason is only suitable for judges, not ordinary citizens. In order to dispel this impression, I shall conclude by highlighting the democratic character of my particular interpretation of public reason as mutual accountability.

Citizens in Robes

In *Political Liberalism* Rawls (1993) claims that in constitutional democracies with judicial review the Supreme Court is the exemplar of public reason (see Rawls 1993, pp. 231–240). According to my interpretation of public reason, this claim is trivially true. For supreme constitutional courts are precisely the institutions in charge of ensuring, among other things, that policies and statutes respect the priority of public reason – that is, that they do not violate the constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens. However, if we keep in mind the internal connection between judicial review and citizens' right to legal contestation we can draw two important conclusions on the democratic significance of the norms of political justification characteristic of constitutional democracies. On the one hand, if citizens endorse the institutions of constitutional democracy that means that they should behave as they expect the court to behave, that is, *they should strive to meet the same standards of scrutiny and justification characteristic of public reason that the exemplar they have instituted is supposed to meet.*²¹ Contrary to what the inclusion and translation models suggest, it makes little sense for citizens to delegate the task of securing the equal protection of their fundamental rights to state officials and the courts while simultaneously undermining that task by letting ordinary citizens make political decisions about fundamental rights in a way that simply gives equal consideration to everyone's comprehensive views and lets the numbers decide. On the other hand, for that very same reason, the contribution of judicial review to political justification cannot be that the courts undertake constitutional review in isolation from political debates in the public sphere, as if justice needs to be in robes in order to properly preserve the priority of public reasons (see Dworkin 2006). To the contrary, the main way judicial review contributes to political justification is that it empowers citizens to call the rest of the citizenry to put on their robes in order to show how the policies they favor are compatible with the equal protection of the fundamental rights of all citizens to which they are all committed as democratic citizens. It is in virtue of this communicative power that all citizens, whether religious or secular, can participate as political equals in the ongoing process of shaping and forming a considered public opinion in support of political decisions they all can own and identify with, as the democratic ideal of self-government requires.

Notes

- 1 Compare for example the strict separationist model of *laïcité* of France and Turkey with the more accommodationist models of India or Australia. For good analyses of the different institutional models of separation see Zuckerman and Shook (2017).
- 2 These two conditions are succinctly expressed in the first two clauses of the First Amendment of the American Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."
- 3 Defences of mutual justifiability as a criterion of democratic legitimacy come in different varieties. For some paradigmatic examples see Rawls (1993, pp. 217–220; 1999, pp. 129–180), Habermas (1998, pp. 107–111), Gutmann and Thompson (2004, p. 133), and Gauss (1996; 2011).
- 4 For well-known defenses of this claim see for example Audi (2011), Habermas (2006), Larmore (1987), Macedo (1990), and Rawls (1993; 1999).
- 5 In contrast to a (theoretical) atheist who consciously believes that God does not exist, a practical atheist simply ignores or disregards religious beliefs. Le Poidevin (2010, p. 97) explains the distinction as follows: "We can distinguish between two kinds of atheism: the theoretical and the practical. To be a theoretical atheist is to believe consciously that God does not exist. To be a practical atheist is to live without belief in God: to live a life in which the idea of God simply has no place."
- 6 For one of the most influential examples of this line of argument see McIntyre (1984; 1988; 1990). For an overview of current defenses of this line of argument among the so-called New Traditionalists see Eberle and Cuneo (2015).
- 7 For this line of criticism see Wolterstorff (1997, pp. 176–177). Wolterstorff (2012) articulates an alternative defense of constitutional democracy that aims to avoid the unfairness objection. As he indicates, the commitment to secure the "equal right to full political voice to all citizens" that lies at the heart of liberal democracy meets the fairness criteria of securing "just treatment of all viewpoints" (Wolterstorff 2012, p. 131). See also Eberle and Cuneo (2015, Section 4).
- 8 Some critics of the exclusivist view defend an intermediate position. They argue for the inclusion of religious reasons in public deliberation within the informal public sphere, yet add a requirement to translate religious reasons into secular reasons before they can be used within official political institutions (parliaments, courts, etc.). In my opinion, this model is unstable. Under scrutiny it collapses into either the exclusivist or the inclusivist model. I offer a criticism along these lines in Lafont (2007).
- 9 See for example the recent analysis of contemporary European extreme right parties and their secular ideologies by Camus (2013).
- 10 See Kim (2008). Analyzing data from twenty countries throughout Western Europe, North America, South America, Asia, and Africa, Kim provides empirical support for the claim that political and cultural variables explain approval of democratic attitudes whereas religious affiliation does not. See also Jamal and Tessler (2008). In the article's abstract, the authors summarize their findings as follows: "The Arab Barometer finds that support for democratic values is present to the same degree among those who favor secular democracy and those who favor a political system that is both democratic and Islamic. Finally, in contrast to some popular misconceptions, personal religiosity does not account for variance in support for democracy, in a preference for secular rather than Islamic democracy, or in attitudes toward authoritarian political formulae." Their most recent survey article largely confirms those findings, see Jamal, Tessler, and Robbins (2012).

- 11 A major weakness of approaches that rely on the religious-secular distinction is the notorious difficulty in providing reliable criteria for identifying what counts as “religion” or as “religious” arguments, reasons, and so on, as well as criteria for distinguishing what is religious from non-religious.
- 12 This is why Audi (2000), for instance, speaks of “adequate” secular reasons. The additional category suggests that after having singled out secular reasons we still need to explain what makes them adequate. But if being “secular” is not the explanation, putting the religious–secular distinction center stage in one’s approach seems at the very least misleading. It would seem more useful to focus on a distinction with the requisite explanatory properties, i.e. one that gives us guidance on how to sort out adequate from inadequate reasons.
- 13 Indeed, Soviet-style state atheism is as incompatible with democracy as theocracy and for the same reasons. Both political systems fail the minimal condition of legitimate government expressed in the ideal of separation of church and state that we mentioned above. They confer official status upon a particular comprehensive doctrine and use state powers to impose (atheistic or religious) beliefs and practices on citizens against their will. A paradigmatic example is the Albanian Constitution of 1976: Article 37 of the Constitution of the People’s Socialist Republic of Albania states “The state recognizes no religion whatever and supports atheist propaganda for the purpose of inculcating the scientific materialist world outlook in people” (see: <http://bjoerna.dk/dokumentation/Albanian-Constitution-1976.htm>, accessed 21 September 2018).
- 14 I omit the additional claim that (iv) public reasons are sufficient to decide all or nearly all fundamental political questions, what Rawls calls the “completeness of public reason,” because this claim is not endorsed by all advocates of the public reason conception of political justification. (See note 15 below.)
- 15 For a detailed critique of this assumption see Eberle (2002: Chapter 7). See also note 8 above.
- 16 Rawls (1993, p. 241) claims that public reason “is suitably complete, that is, for at least the great majority of fundamental questions, possibly for all, some combination and balance of political values alone reasonably shows the answer.” This assumption has been forcefully criticized by many authors. For detailed versions of this critique see e.g., Sandel (2005, pp. 223 ff.) and Eberle (2002: Part III).
- 17 For some well-known examples see Raz (1986), Sher (1997), and Arneson (2003).
- 18 I offer a detailed account of my proposal in Lafont (2014).
- 19 As in many other cases (e.g., pornography, hate speech) it is perfectly consistent with democratic principles to be simultaneously against the use of the headscarf and against the ban of the headscarf. For an argument along these lines see Laborde (2012).
- 20 In March of 2015, Germany’s highest court ruled that a complete ban on teachers wearing headscarves is not compatible with religious freedom. This ruling also overturned another clause in North Rhine-Westphalian law that exempted manifestations “of Christian and Western educational and cultural values or traditions” at schools from the otherwise complete ban on ostensible demonstrations of religious affiliation. The court decided that this exception constituted a privileging of Christian symbols over those of other religions, which would go against the ban on discrimination on religious grounds that is enshrined in the German constitution. This decision overturned the court’s own ruling on 2003, which allowed states to pass laws banning the headscarf.
- 21 As Rawls (1993: lv) puts it: “public reason sees the office of citizen with its duty of civility as analogous to that of judgeship with its duty of deciding cases.”

References

- Arneson, R. (2003) "Liberal neutrality on the good: An autopsy," in S. Wall and G. Klosko (eds.) *Perfectionism and Neutrality*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Audi, R. (2000) *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Audi, R. (2011) *Democratic Authority and the Separation of Church and State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Camus, J-Y. (2013) "The European extreme right parties and their secular ideologies," in A. Mammone, E. Godin, and B. Jenkins (eds.) *Varieties of Right-Wing Extremism in Europe*. New York: Routledge, pp. 107–120.
- Clarke, R. (2003) *Libertarian Accounts of Free Will*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dworkin, R. (2006) *Justice in Robes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Eberle, C. (2002) *Religious Conviction in Liberal Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eberle, C., and Cuneo, T. (2015) *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. Available at <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/religion-politics/> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Gauss, G. (1996) *Justificatory Liberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gauss, G. (2011) *The Order of Public Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gutmann, A., and Thompson, D. (2004) *Why Deliberative Democracy?* Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Habermas, J. (1998) *Between Facts and Norms*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Habermas, J. (2006) "Religion in the public sphere." *European Journal of Philosophy* 14: 1–25.
- Jamal, A., and Tessler, M. (2008) "The democracy barometers: Attitudes in the Arab world." *Journal of Democracy* 19: 97–110.
- Jamal, A., Tessler, M., and Robbins, M. (2012) "New findings on Arabs and democracy." *Journal of Democracy* 23: 89–103.
- Jenkins, S. (2010) "Making merit through warfare according to the Ārya-Bodhisattva-gocara-upāyavisaya-vikurvana-nirdēsa Sūtra," in M. Jerryson and M. Juergensmeyer (eds.) *Buddhist Warfare*. New York: Oxford University Press, 59–75.
- Kim, M. (2008) "Spiritual values, religious practices and democratic attitudes." *Politics and Religion* 1: 216–236.
- Laborde, C. (2012) "State paternalism and religious dress code," *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 10: 398–410.
- Lafont, C. (2007) "Religion in the public sphere: remarks on Habermas' conception of public deliberation in post-secular societies." *Constellations* 14: 239–259.
- Lafont, C. (2014) "Religious pluralism in a deliberative democracy," in F. Requejo and C. Ungureanu (eds.) *Secular or Post-Secular Democracies in Europe? The Challenge of Religious Pluralism in the Twenty-First Century*. London: Routledge, pp. 46–60.
- Larmore, C. (1987) *Patterns of Moral Complexity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Le Poidevin, R. (2010) *Agnosticism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Macedo, S. (1990) "The politics of justification." *Political Theory* 18: 280–304.
- McIntyre, A. (1984) *After Virtue*, 2nd edn. Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press.
- McIntyre, A. (1988) *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press.
- McIntyre, A. (1990) *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry*. Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press.
- Rawls, J. (1993) *Political Liberalism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rawls, J. (1999) *The Law of Peoples*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rawls, J. (2000) *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy*, ed. B. Herman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Raz, J. (1986) *The Morality of Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sandel, M. (2005) *Public Philosophy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sher, G. (1997) *Beyond Neutrality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wolterstorff, N. (1997) "Why we should reject what liberalism tells us about speaking and acting in public for religious reasons," in P. Weithman (ed.) *Religion and Contemporary Liberalism*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Wolterstorff, N. (2012) *Understanding Liberal Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zuckerman, P., and Shook, J. (eds.) (2017) *The Oxford Handbook of Secularism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Part VIII

Critiques of Atheism

Logical Objections to Atheism

CHRISTOPHER GREGORY WEAVER

An objection from logical considerations against atheism is one which attempts to show that some deliverance of logic is at odds with atheism or something strictly implied by atheism. The formulation of such an objection begs the question: which logic? Below I object to Rudolf Carnap's logical principle of tolerance, subsequently showing by appeal to the important work of Geoffrey Hellman that there are good pragmatic reasons for adopting a classical logic. I then suggest that a deliverance of classical logic leads to what I call the new phenomenon of coordination. It is that phenomenon that causes problems for not only ontological naturalism, but also atheism.

Logical Monism or Something Near Enough

A classical first-order logic (CFOL) is a formal first-order language built on classical propositional logic (CPL), outfitted with the classical quantifier rules¹ and a specific formal semantics.² In addition, CFOL abides by the following three principles:

Principle 1: Every well-formed formula's (wff's) truth-value on some interpretation \mathcal{I} (where interpretations include non-empty universes of discourse) is completely fixed via the extension of the parts of that wff under \mathcal{I} .

Principle 2: There are only two truth-values, truth and falsehood.

Principle 3: Every wff on any assumed interpretation \mathcal{I} has exactly one truth-value.³

Some non-intuitionist, non-classical first-order logics affirm principles (2) and (3), but fail to obey (1). Most positive free first-order logics (P-FFOL) are like this. Well-formed formulas of those logics can have truth-values (on an interpretation) that do not depend on the extensions of the parts of those wffs, since some singular terms such as individual constants can fail to refer, and yet the expressions featuring those terms remain true.⁴

Other free first-order logics (FFOLs) are non-classical because they abandon the classical quantifier rules, or because they allow for truth-value gaps (e.g., neutral-free logic). Intuitionism yields a rejection of either (2), or (3), since from them it would appear to follow (in a classical meta-language) that:

Principle 4: Every wff on any one interpretation \mathcal{I} is either true or false.⁵

Some logics reject (2) (e.g., many-valued logics), and some others reject (3). Examples of the (3)-violating type include those non-classical FOLs which assert that some wffs under an interpretation are gappy in the sense that some wffs of those languages do not have a truth-value at all. Glut-laden non-classical first-order logics entail that there is a third truth-value (a truth-value glut) and so countenance wffs, which under an interpretation, possess neither truth nor falsehood, but are instead both true and false.⁶

Further distinguishing features of classical logic include its very elegant formal properties. For example, CPL is Post-complete, in that the system becomes inconsistent just as soon as one adds to it, as an axiom, a sentence that is a non-theorem of the system (Church 1996, pp. 109-110). CFOL is not Post-complete, though with respect to that logic, Herbrand's theorem applies (Herbrand 1971). Here's what I have in mind. Suppose there's a valid wff of CFOL p , and a correlative valid formula q of CPL. Herbrand's theorem entails that p 's validity is nothing over and above, q 's validity. There are no applicable and general analogues of this theorem in non-classical logics such as intuitionism (Rumfitt 2015, p. 14). Moreover, with regard to CPL, there are ways of justifying the inference rules of that logic from even a non-classical metalogic.⁷ Examples could be multiplied.

I am a necessitist. Necessitism is the view that necessarily, every entity/thing is necessarily some entity/thing.⁸ I'm led to necessitism by an unflinching endorsement of classical quantified modal logic (CQML) – a quantified modal logic that respects (1)–(4) above – and a rejection of Rudolf Carnap's (1959, p. xv) logical pluralist *principle of tolerance* (PT). PT says that there is no one true mathematics or logic. Rational cognizers may appropriate varying logics for multifarious pursuits, and logics need not be viewed as conflicting with one another since they are different languages constructed for different modes of inquiry.⁹

Logical pluralisms that affirm the PT are *strong logical pluralisms*. These pluralisms face an important problem. How does the classical logician stay classical with respect to the first-order calculus, and yet revert to a free logic in spheres of inquiry that have need of a modal first-order calculus? Quantified modal logic is assembled on a non-modal first-order logic. FFOLs have altogether different axiomatizations than CFOL. The difference in axiomatization produces differing lists of theorems. When the free and classical logicians disagree about axioms and theorems of first-order logic that disagreement is substantive. As Hartry Field stated (2009, p. 358), "[w]hen they disagree in their theorems (or at least, when one has theorems that the proponent of the other [logic] can be expected to disagree with), the dispute ... seems a clearly factual one." The theorems of FFOL and of CFOL cannot both be correct unless the strong pluralist is also a pluralist about logical truth. Pluralism about logical truth *in this context* amounts to the admission that in varying logical languages are varying logical truths.

But again, that seems to suggest that – to take just one example – the conditional $\forall x(Fx) \rightarrow \exists x(Fx)$ is both a logical truth, and not a logical truth (it is in fact false in inclusive or universally free first-order logics; see Lambert (2001a, pp. 259–260) on the theme of universally free logic). That seems like a bad result. The theorems of CQML and non-classical (or more specifically universally free quantified modal logics) cannot both be correct. It would be problematic for one to embrace the theorems of CFOL and at the same time embrace the theorems of universally free quantified modal logics, since the legitimacy of the latter logics rests squarely upon the legitimacy of universally free first-order logics.

The defender of strong pluralism or something like PT in the context of classical and free modal logics has a typical line of response. They often attempt to show that the free logician's understanding of the connectives is fundamentally different from the classical logician's understanding, and that therefore there is no real disagreement between the free and classical modal logicians. But this response fails. The two in fact have the same take on the meanings of the logical connectives. There is also no real disagreement about the meanings of the quantifiers. Free logicians modify their quantifier rules (e.g., by rejecting $\vdash \forall x(Fx) \rightarrow \exists x(Fx)$, or by adding axioms (as in negative free logic) so as to avoid licensing undesirable inferences.¹⁰ But even if the free and classical logician disagreed about the meanings of the connectives, it still seems there's substantial disagreement. For as Field (2009: 345) has pointed out, it does not follow from a difference in meaning (in the weak sense we have in mind) that there is no substantial dispute between those who appropriate differing logics. In the history of physics, Lorentz disagreed with Einstein about the meaning of the term, 'simultaneity' but that does not mean they didn't have conflicting accounts of the phenomenon of simultaneity in special relativity (Field uses the example of disagreement over the meaning of the term 'electron' in the theories of J.J. Thomson and E. Rutherford).

I also reject a milder, though non-trivial, form of logical pluralism in the work of J. C. Beall and Greg Restall (2000; 2006).¹¹ According to them, a characterization of logical consequence in deductive logic amounts to a statement about validity.

Logical Consequence Schema (LCS): A deductive argument is valid, just in case, there is no situation in which the premises are true and the conclusion false.¹²

Varying deductive logics yield varying *admissible* accounts of logical consequence in so far as they provide numerous ways of understanding the notion of a *situation* in LCS.¹³ Those alternative specifications of situation suggest differing accounts of validity. That is to say, an account of logical consequence provides a means whereby one can properly judge what propositions are logical consequences of some collection of propositions or perhaps the empty set of propositional parameters. The modes of evaluation waver in a manner that is dependent upon the assumed precisification of *situation* (see Beall and Restall 2006, pp. 29, 35, 75–83).

If the situations are complete and consistent possible worlds or Tarskian models (there is pluralism even within one language for Beall and Restall), then classical logic is appropriate (Beall and Restall 2000). However, if the situations are, for example, constructions of a mathematical sort and are therefore incomplete though consistent, then the logic is constructive or intuitionist.¹⁴ What precisification you appropriate

depends upon your goals and aims. As Beall and Restall put it when discussing the logic of choice for their discussion,

The pluralist claim is that, given a body of informal reasoning ..., you can use different consequence relations in order to analyse the reasoning. As to **which** relation we wish our own reasoning to be evaluated by, we are happy to say: any and all (admissible) ones! ... It depends, of course, on whether the given kind of verification preservation is important to the task at hand. (2006, p. 99)

With respect to free logic, however, what are situations like? The positive free logician can understand “situation” in LCS in terms of a set of worlds including those in which some singular term that is an individual constant “t” fails to denote though at those worlds it is (or can be) true that Ft. In other words, while t is empty, it could be true to predicate in the way suggested by Ft.¹⁵ This is because on every positive free logic the principle of independence (PI) holds, where PI states that entities may have properties even if those entities do not exist (Paśnieszek 2001).¹⁶

On weak pluralism, one could sidestep some metaphysical positions like necessitism by simply refusing to countenance whatever situation-types were appropriated in the definition of logical consequence in the metaphysical inquiry that leads to necessitism.¹⁷ As I will show below, CQML gives you necessitism. If the weak pluralist agrees that classical logic is the logic of choice for metaphysical inquiry, but not in other contexts, I will not demur (hence the subtitle of this section). However, if they reject classical logic as the choice logic for that inquiry, we will need a reason why. In other words, if one is a weak pluralist, it will be important for one to provide justification for your choice precisification of “situation” in LCS for metaphysical inquiry. In the absence of independent reasons, shifting logics to avoid necessitism seems like cheating.

Can the weak pluralist avoid the charge of inconsistency levelled against strong pluralism? Beall and Restall (2006, p. 100) answer *yes*. Their pluralism is a pluralism about logical consequence and (in a qualified sense) logical truth, not a pluralism about truth *simpliciter*. This is because for them, a logical truth p of free quantified modal logic (FQML) is just one that holds in all suitably precisified situations (call these situations_{PF} for positive free logical consequence). A proposition or statement p does not conflict with a logical truth of CQML, since q holds at every classically precisified situation (call these situations_C).

It is a substantive metaphysical question whether or not there are situations_{PF}. First, I might conceive of exemplification as a nexus tying together concrete particulars – understood as Aristotelian substances – and properties. That nexus or relation does not exist without relata. How can an object stand in an exemplification relation, or nexus if that object does not exist? There are, of course, Bradley-style regresses to worry about with regard to this conception of exemplification, but that regress may be benign, or else no regress at all (see Moreland’s 2001, p. 116 very nice response to the regress problem for exemplification). The metaphysical view just articulated seems inconsistent with the principle of independence.

Second, suppose I affirmed a truth-maker thesis, that every truth p has a truth-maker that de re necessitates its truth. We say that an entity e de re necessitates a proposition p

if and only if e 's existing entails (in some non-de dicto sense) p .¹¹ Relative to situation- s_{pf} , what would make the claim <Santa Claus gives gifts.> true? The question is a difficult one. As we shall see, analogous questions can be raised in the context of an evaluation of intuitionism. It is a substantive metaphysical question, whether or not there are constructive and consistent situations (situations $_i$). More on this later.

You are free to balk at the underlying metaphysical theses used to give the relevant (in the sense of contextual salience) logicians pause. The point remains: metaphysics can drive a rejection of the existence of the referents of the suitably precisified situations. I believe this is because logic is a type of metaphysics (*à la* Russell 1920, p. 169; Sider 2011, pp. 97–98; Williamson 2013); or as Rumfitt (2015, p. 219) put it, “[m]etaphysical considerations cannot be extruded from rational decisions between rival logical systems.” I will assume that the best metaphysical account of properties and concrete substances ties them together via a nexus of exemplification. I will therefore be entitled to reject the principle of independence and so the existence of situations $_{pf}$. This is in the spirit of searching for that notion of logical consequence that cuts at the deep joints of reality. This is in the spirit of trying to answer the question: which, among the many admissible precisifications of “situation” in the LCS, is the fundamental, or joint carving precisification? The answer “none,” betrays the fact that logic is a type of metaphysics, and the promulgator of that answer leaves themselves open to the following objection.

The Success Argument for Classical Logical Consequence

1. The correct admissible precisification of “situation” in LCS in physics (including mathematical physics) is situation $_c$.
2. It would be a “miracle” if the (i) justification, (ii) content, and (iii) deliverances of our most empirically successful theories in physics were versimilitudinous, though the admissible precisification of logical consequence at work in (i)–(iii) with respect to the empirically successful sectors of physics was not fundamental (or joint carving).
3. If (1) and (2), then interlocutors in the ontology room (the place in which the standards of precision are set appropriately for metaphysical inquiry into the hierarchy of being and what exists) should appropriate situation $_c$ as their choice admissible precisification of “situation” in LCS.
4. Therefore, interlocutors in the ontology room should appropriate situation $_c$ as their choice admissible precisification of “situation” in LCS.¹⁸

I will leave justification of (1) to my discussion in the next section. Premise (2) is reminiscent of a premise in a formulation of the (no) miracles or success argument for scientific realism in the philosophy of science.¹⁹ It would be a very strange fact indeed, if the justification of, and mathematical formalism peculiar to empirically successful physical theories required distinctively classical reasoning and inference, though that type of inference or logical consequence was somehow disconnected from the fundamental nature of the world. If anything informs us about the deep structure of the world it is empirically successful physics and physical theorizing (including the underlying mathematics). That theorizing requires situations $_c$ (again see the next

section). That fact seems to justify the use of situation_c in LCS in spheres of inquiry concerned with the fundamental nature of reality (hence premise (3)).²⁰

The Pragmatic Case for Classical Logical Consequence

The strong pluralism of Carnap faces an inconsistency charge. The weak pluralism of Beall and Restall can be appropriated by the opponent of necessitism, if that weak pluralist agrees that the choice admissible precisification of “situation” with respect to LCS in the context of metaphysical inquiry is the classical one. This section will argue against the weak pluralist who would attempt to appropriate a different notion of logical consequence in that self-same inquiry. My reasons for preferring classical logic are pragmatic. One cannot properly underwrite mathematical physics without classical logic.²¹ The logic itself was conceived for the purpose of making explicit and rigorous the sense of validity employed by mathematicians in mathematical reasoning. As Burgess stated: “Classical logic was developed by Frege, Peano, Russell, Hilbert, Skolem, Gödel, Tarski, and other founders as an extension of traditional logic mainly, if not solely, about proof procedures in mathematics”(1992, p.9) Indeed, classically based mathematics (a mathematics that requires classical logic) is that which pure ZF-set theory is approximating (Burgess 1992, p. 18).

By far the most far-reaching and substantive attempt to recapture certain spheres of applied mathematics for non-classical logics has come from intuitionist-based constructive mathematics (constructive mathematics just is math done with an intuitionistic logic: Bridges 1999, p. 440; and see Bridges and Palmgren 2013). The problem is that their efforts come up short. Douglas S. Bridges – a foremost authority on constructive math – has remarked: “It is clear that a constructive examination of the mathematical foundations of quantum physics does reveal substantial problems” (1981, p.272). Let us look at some of the details.

First, consider both bounded and unbounded linear Hermitian or symmetrical essentially self-adjoint operators in non-relativistic and relativistic quantum mechanics (QM).²² These are operators that provide the means whereby one transmutes a vector into yet another vector in the complex linear vector space called a Hilbert space \mathcal{H} . They are put into service as devices that help mathematically represent real physical quantities such as momentum, position, and energy (Weinberg 2013, p.61). The non-Hermitian annihilation (A) and creation (A^*) operators, as well as the Hamiltonian operator (which is Hermitian) can be understood as functions of momentum and position operators. These quantum operators are therefore very important for understanding the dynamics of relativistic and non-relativistic QM (Hellman 1993a, pp. 240, 247n5; Weinberg 2013, p. 78).

A subset (call it σ) of the collection of quantum operators on the Hilbert space are closed, linear, and unbounded when \mathcal{H} is infinitely dimensional,²³ and when the operator is only defined over a restricted domain of that space that is dense. In fact, it is a theorem of mathematical physics that any closed operator that is linear and that is defined over all of the space must be bounded (see Riesz and Sz-Nagy 1990, pp. 296–299, 306–307). We have already reached a shortcoming of constructive mathematical physics, the proofs for this theorem are distinctively classical and

nonconstructive (Hellman 1993b, p. 223), and I am unaware of constructive surrogate proofs. Ignore this for now. Let our choice collection σ , also include quantum operators that fall under the theorem of Marian Pour-El and Ian Richards (1983), or rather, an extension of that theorem as supplied by Hellman (1993b, p. 228). Our members of σ will therefore also be computable (in the sense Pour-El and Richards have in mind) and defined over a Banach space. This will mean that every member of σ satisfies constructive extensions of the Pour-El and Richards axioms for a computable operator as supplied by Hellman (1993b). These revised axioms replace the occurrence of ‘recursive function(s)’ in those axioms with something constructively acceptable, viz., “natural number constructive function.” Hellman (1993b) notes that given such replacement, the proof provided by Pour-El and Richards no longer works, and as a result the operators that fall under that theorem are non-constructive items or objects. As it turns out, the proof of Pour-El and Richards is distinctively non-constructive and classical. This fact has not been resisted by constructive mathematicians. For example, Bridges’ (1995, p. 559) reply to Hellman ends with the assertion that the proof’s inclusion of the convergence of a certain series is non-constructive and distinctively classical in that the reasoning used to ‘establish’ it is classical. Elsewhere, particularly in Bridges’ (1999) general treatment of constructively based mathematical physics, he confesses: “... while *there may be* some significant, fully constructive analogue of the First Main Theorem, a careful analysis ... reveals that the Pour-El and Richards proof of that theorem has little or no significant constructive content (Bridges 1999: 445, emphasis mine)

Ye’s (2000) study attempts to bring many theorems of physical interest back under the banner of constructivist mathematics. The Pour-El and Richards theorem is conspicuously missing from that study, as is a discussion of those closed linear unbounded operators that fall under that theorem. Hellman’s result seems well in hand.

Constructivists attempt to resist, not the result, but the classicists’ interpretation of it. Hellman (1997) has observed that if constructivist mathematics is unable to recognize members of σ , two things follow. First, dynamical evolutions from a quantum state ψ of a quantum physical system represented by the relevant operators cannot be modeled by constructivist QM. Second, states such as ψ should be such that they can take expectation values of a variety relevant to measurable quantities that are themselves peculiar to such states. But that fact is precluded if the math cannot handle operators in σ that have ψ as their prejacents.²⁴

Constructivist mathematics has a problem establishing certain of the singularity theorems in general relativity. More specifically, it cannot be used to prove the broader theorems of Stephen Hawking and Roger Penrose (1970) as Hellman (1998, pp. 436–437) has noted. This is an important methodological constraint, one that appears to count against going constructivist in one’s mathematical physics. Defenders of constructivist mathematics have once again refrained from resisting the result. As Billinge’s (2000, p. 316) reply to Hellman concluded: “I concede that the Hawking-Penrose singularity theorems of General Relativity are likely to be non-constructive since they tell us merely that singularities exist, and do not provide any further information about the nature of such singularities.” There are, therefore, strong pragmatic considerations from physics in favor of endorsing classical (over constructive) logic in physical inquiry.

There are other problems too. Consider the mathematics of the calculus of variations. Therein lives the extreme value theorem (EVT) which states that “a continuous function on a compact domain assumes its maximum (minimum) value at some point” (Hellman 1998, p. 431). There is no constructive proof of this important theorem of calculus. Constructive mathematicians do not resist this judgment either. We can infer from the conclusions of Troelstra and van Dalen (1988, pp. 292–295) that if there were a constructive proof of EVT, there would exist a constructive proof of something that is known to be non-constructive (thanks to Andy Arana for help here). That is impossible.

We could pile on more examples, but I leave it to the reader to study the debate (see particularly Hellman 1993a; 1993b; 1998). Specific cases aside, we should not forget that after the development of intuitionism in the early twentieth century, the proposed revision of classically based mathematics given by constructive mathematics was “rejected by the vast majority of mathematicians ...” (Burgess 2009, p. 121). When one adds that in the relevant history, the underlying motivating philosophy was likewise rejected as deeply problematic, the prospects of justifying the appropriation of intuitionistically precisified situations in the mathematical-physical sphere look dim. As justification for the latter claim about the underlying philosophy, consider the fact that Brouwer and Dummett (two of the early pioneers of intuitionism) were both verificationists about truth and meaning. Each affirmed that every truth is verifiable, and that such verifiability is even a necessary condition for the meanings of substantive declarative sentences. That underlying verificationism implies that all truths are known, given the famous Church–Fitch knowability result (for which see Church 2009; Fitch 1963; Hart and McGinn 1976, pp. 205–206; Kvanvig 2006, pp. 8–14; and Salerno 2009a; 2009b), and while ordinary derivations of that result are classical, Priest (2009, pp. 98–99) has found a way to intuitionistically derive a correlative result that yields a conclusion that intuitionists should not accept (viz., $\sim Kp \rightarrow \sim p$).

Set aside problems with the underlying motivation. As was suggested earlier, logic is a type of metaphysics. There can be metaphysical reasons in favor of precluding the intuitionist precisification of “situation” in LCS. Not only that, there can exist other philosophical reasons, reasons from the philosophy of language, for abandoning the existence of certain admissible precisifications of “situation” in LCS. Let me illustrate these two points about metaphysics and philosophy of language constraining logic by way of an objection to intuitionism from those two subdisciplines of philosophy.

Assume a metaphysics of propositions according to which, propositions are mind-independent entities, and assume that propositions are fundamental truth-value bearers such that, a non-propositional entity only gets to be true or false because it expresses or better (following King 2002) designates a true or false proposition (call such views, realist-F views), or else it stands in some appropriate relation to propositions (e.g., beliefs might be true or false because they have as their contents true or false propositions). On intuitionism, however, there is something like a verification, proof, or constructive condition on truth (van Dalen 2001, p. 224) such that a sentence P that is true in an intuitionistically precisified situation _{i} is one for which there exists a proof, or construction, or verification that P . But do sentences only begin to designate true propositions just as soon as there begins to exist a verification of them, or a verification that there’s no verification of them (as in the case of intuitionistically interpreted $\sim P$)? There is no theory of proposition-designation that would suggest as much. We typically regard

as proposition-designating linguistic items – like that-specifying clauses within declarative sentences laden with the notion “proposition” (e.g., “Russell believed the proposition that God does not exist”), or linguistic items in sincere utterances (or sentences expressing denials, assertions, objects of belief) – those entities that stand in logical relations and so on, because we believe propositions just are the objects of denials, assertions, beliefs, and so on (following Bolzano, Frege, Russell and many others).

Let us suppose that the conditions of true proposition-designation are intimately connected to the existence of a proof. It would follow that I could never truthfully assert, believe, or deny without it being the case that there exists a proof of what I’m asserting, or a proof that there is no proof of what I’m denying, and so on. This seems wrong. We were in the business of truthfully asserting, denying, agreeing and so on before the existence of verification and proof procedures. The conditions of true proposition-designation have nothing to do with the existence of certain types of mental entities or activities that are proofs or verifications.

If you interpret the constructive condition on truth in intuitionism as a condition on the truth of propositions, then the object language that is intuitionistic logic should be outfitted with propositions instead of sentences. This would be problematic on many realist-F views of propositions. For example, Merricks (2015) believes that propositions do not have logical forms, and do not have logical connectives as constituents. For Stalnaker (1976, pp 79–80); and Lewis (1986, p. 53), propositions are the very sets of worlds at which the sentences expressing those propositions are true. Given that situations_i are possible worlds, it is unclear how those entities are fine-grained enough to allow for a difference between intuitionistic equivalences, or the various theorems and/or axioms of intuitionistic logic, all of which one might think hold at all admissible intuitionistically precisified situations_i, where again these are now being understood as worlds.²⁵ Moreover, it looks as if p would be identical to $\sim\sim p$ on such a view of propositions. That would seem to make it difficult to affirm that p and $\sim\sim p$ are not equivalent. On intuitionism, both $(p \vee \sim p)$ the law of excluded middle, and $(p \rightarrow \sim\sim p)$ are rejected as theorems or axioms. This is because the addition of either statement as an axiom yields the theorem-hood of the other statement in the intuitionist system (see Burgess 2009, pp. 127–130, for the proofs). Double negation elimination is therefore intuitionistically unacceptable.

Perhaps one shouldn’t think of situations_i as possible worlds. Beall and Restall (2000, p. 477) only recommend a possible worlds precisification of “situation” in LCS for a distinctive classical understanding of logical consequence, not for intuitionist logical consequence. I counter that even on the supposition that possible worlds are only suitable for classical admissible precisifications of “situation” in LCS, it remains true that if we appropriate a realist-F view firmly within the Stalnaker–Lewis tradition, $p = \sim\sim p$. The lesson here is that one’s metaphysics of propositions, and one’s views about proposition-designation can constrain one’s views about logic and logical consequence.

Without situations_i, we don’t have intuitionism as a choice among the plurality of logics to choose from for mathematical-physical spheres of inquiry. But nothing comes even close to recovering the results of mathematics and physics outside of constructive math and classical math. Thus, we have good reasons then for affirming that the correct and admissible precisification of “situation” in LCS in physics (including mathematical physics) is situation_c. I have already justified the remaining two premises of the success argument for classical logical consequence. We are left then with the conclusion that

interlocutors in the ontology room should appropriate situation_c as their choice precisification of “situation” in LCS. Let us now visit the ontology room with situations_c in hand.

From Classical Logic to Necessitism

From classical assumptions, I will prove that:²⁶

$$(NNE): \blacksquare \forall x \blacksquare \exists y (x = y)$$

That is to say, necessarily for any x , necessarily there is at least a y , such that x is identical to y . In Williamson’s (2013, p. 2) slogan, NNE says that “necessarily everything is necessarily something.” That NNE follows from classical logic may strike one as a truly confounding claim. How can it be that classical considerations yield such a shocking truth? There are several routes to NNE from classical reasoning. Let’s start with a route that brings in a more heavy-duty assumption and then slim down.

Many philosophers believe that S5 is the system of modal logic that correctly captures our intuitions or correct ideas about the nature of metaphysical necessity and possibility.²⁷ Interestingly, S5 classical (or) constant domain QML entails necessitism as a theorem. Here’s the proof (the complete and sound tableaux system in this case is from Priest 2008, pp. 6–11, 45–46, 266–277, 308–315, 350–352. It would correspond to an S5(NI) proof system):

$$\sim \blacksquare \forall x \blacksquare \exists y (x = y), 0$$

$$\blacklozenge \sim \forall x \blacksquare \exists y (x = y), 0$$

$$\sim \forall x \blacksquare \exists y (x = y), 1$$

$$\exists x \sim \blacksquare \exists y (x = y), 1$$

$$\sim \blacksquare \exists y (a = y), 1$$

$$\blacklozenge \sim \exists y (a = y), 1$$

$$\sim \exists y (a = y), 2$$

$$\forall y \sim (a = y), 2$$

$$\sim (a = a), 2$$

$$(a = a), 2$$

$$X$$

Therefore, $\vdash_{S5QML} \blacksquare \forall x \blacksquare \exists y (x = y)$.²⁸

In fact, NNE is a theorem on a much weaker system of modal logic, viz., system K. Consider:

$$(1) \blacksquare(\forall x)(\exists y)(x = y) [\text{Theorem}]$$

Here is a tableaux proof showing that $\vdash_{\text{CK}} \blacksquare(\forall x)(\exists y)(x = y)$:²⁹

$$\sim \blacksquare(\forall x)(\exists y)(x = y), 0$$

$$\blacklozenge \sim (\forall x)(\exists y)(x = y), 0$$

$$\text{Or1}$$

$$\sim (\forall x)(\exists y)(x = y), 1$$

$$(\exists x) \sim (\exists y)(x = y), 1$$

$$\sim (\exists y)(a = y), 1$$

$$(\forall y) \sim (a = y), 1$$

$$\sim (a = a), 1$$

$$(a = a), 1$$

$$\text{X}$$

$$(2) (\forall x)(\exists y)(x = y) [\text{Nec.Elim. (1)}]$$

$$(3) (\exists y)(v = y) [\text{UI (2)}]$$

But what follows from what is necessary, must itself be necessary:

$$(4) \blacksquare(\exists y)(v = y)$$

$$(5) (\forall x) \blacksquare(\exists y)(x = y) [\text{UG (4)}]$$

And again, what follows from what is necessary, is itself necessary

$$(6) \blacksquare(\forall x) \blacksquare(\exists y)(x = y)^{30}$$

Of course, (6) is NNE. Thus, NNE follows from classical constant domain QML given just K (the weakest normal modal logic).³¹

Let contingentism be the thesis that NNE is false (following Williamson 2013, p. 2). The contingentist will point out that the above proofs assume constant domain modal logics. According to such logics, the census of individuals does not change from world to world since the domain does not vary among accessible worlds. It is therefore no surprise that NNE holds on such logics. What we should ask is whether or not there

are classical varying domain QMLs that provide an escape for the classical contingentist? No, there are not (at least there are no unproblematic logics fitting that description).³² Every classical normal CQML validates the converse Barcan formula (CBF), which can be used to prove NNE (see Hale 2013: 207).³³ Let me explain.

One standard way of connecting normal *varying* domain QMLs with the classical quantifier rules involves adding in the increasing domains principle (also called the nested domains constraint). Let ‘R’ be the accessibility relation between worlds w and w^* with respective domains D_w and D_{w^*} . The increasing domains principle says that necessarily, $D_w \subseteq D_{w^*}$, given that R_{ww^*} , or necessarily if w^* is accessible from w , then the domain of world w is a subset of the domain of world w^* . The principle is necessary because varying domain classical and normal QMLs cannot validate the CBF without it. But again, dispensing with CBF would sacrifice either the classicality or (inclusive) the normality of the QML in question, because every normal and classical QML validates the CBF.³⁴

But even varying domain classical normal QMLs that affirm the increasing domains principle should not be accepted for reasons having to do with an argument from Garson (1991, p. 113, p. 115) and Schurz (2002, pp. 468–469). Their objection may be paraphrased as follows: Suppose that ‘h’ names Han Solo, that all proper names are rigid designators, and that ‘@’ picks out the actual world. Given contingentism, Han Solo will not be a member of the domain of @ (note that $h \notin D_{@}$, $V(h) \notin D_{@}$, and $V(h) \notin V_{@}(F)$, where F is a monadic predicate). Assume, however, that every entity that is a member of @’s domain has F . Thus, $(\forall x)(Fx)$ holds at @, though Fh does not hold. Since our logic is classical, $\sim Fh$ holds at @. But $\sim Fh$ conflicts with $(\forall x)(Fx)$, since from it one can derive $(\exists x)\sim(Fx)$. Thus, a varying domain QML seems to be incompatible with the classical quantifier rules.

Furthermore, normal classical QMLs with the nested domains constraint implies a constant domain QML, so long as the following principle holds:

$$(7) \quad p \rightarrow \blacksquare \blacklozenge p [\text{Axiom B}]$$

i.e., so long as the accessibility relation of the logic is symmetric. This is a well-known result in the literature on quantified modal logic (see Schurz 2002, p. 468).³⁵

It’s clear then. Classical quantified modal logic implies necessitism. Noted philosophical logicians have already realized this and have on that basis pushed for the adoption of a free modal logic. Garson writes: “... the stipulations required in order to preserve the classical principles do not always sit well with our intuitions. Our conclusion, then, is that there is little reason to attempt to preserve the classical rules in formulating systems with the objectual interpretation and world-relative domains. The principles of free logic are much better suited to the task” (Garson 1984, p. 261).³⁶

I have already argued that positive free logic requires the principle of independence, and that that commitment yields its implausibility for metaphysical reasons. But there are also negative and neutral free logics. Negative free logics imply that sentences featuring singular terms that fail to denote are false, while neutral-free logics say of such sentences that they take truth-value gaps. Gappy logics are non-classical on account of

a denial of (Principle 3). They, like non-free but non-classical logics, cannot properly underwrite mathematical physics since they give up on the law of excluded middle.³⁷ We should therefore forgo on adopting neutral free logics.

Negative free modal logics have severe problems, for some such systems are crafted in such a way that there is only one domain (a domain of existing objects/entities) and yet sentences involving modal predication to nonexistent objects (objects not in the domain of the actual world) must be understood in such a way that they express falsehoods. So, consider:

(8) $\Diamond B_h$

where ‘ Bx ’ means “ x is brave,” and where “ h ” is once again Han Solo. Single domain negative free QMLs deliver the verdict that (8) is false since h fails to refer. However, the falsehood of (8) entails that it is impossible that Han Solo is brave, and that seems counterintuitive. Consider now proposition (9):

(9) $\Diamond E_h$

where “ E_x ” means “ x exists.” Again, the negative free modal logician must say of (9) that it is false. But that entails that h could not possibly exist. In fact, the following is appropriated as an axiom of single-domain negative free quantified modal logic (see Schwarz 2013, p. 35)³⁸:

(10) $(\forall x)(\sim E_x \rightarrow \blacksquare \sim E_x)$

Proposition (10) is clearly incredible if necessitism is false.

Tim Crane (2013, p. 55) has voiced some powerful objections to negative free logics. Crane asks us to consider a case in which someone (Brandon) thinks about Han Solo. Unsurprisingly, in such a scenario, the sentence “Brandon is thinking about Han Solo” seems to come out obviously true. However, the sentence expresses a statement with a polyadic relational predicate. One of the singular terms next to that predicate is empty (viz., “ h ” for Han Solo), and so negative free logic will demand that it be dismissed as false, *reductio ad absurdum*.

What of two domain negative free quantified modal logics? (See Bencivenga 2002, pp. 298–289, on the theme of two domains; see also LeBlanc and Thomason 1968.) I’m afraid such systems are underdeveloped. In fact, I cannot find a complete presentation of any such logic. Embracing free logic seems therefore to be an implausible way of avoiding necessitism.

From Necessitism to the Falsity of Naturalism and then to Theism

Here is a way of making the atheist uncomfortable via necessitism. Assume that it is implausible to regard all actual concrete entities as necessarily concrete. Given necessitism, the sense in which I could have failed to exist is best characterized in terms of my failing to be concrete. Thus, I and the entire host of the cosmos, including the cosmos itself, are

all contingently concrete. Let us build that rather plausible view into necessitism or at least suggest that it is a truth one should affirm alongside necessitism (See Linsky and Zalta 1996; Williamson 1998). Now consider the following argument:

- (1) If necessitism is true, then ontological naturalism is false.
- (2) Necessitism is true.
- (3) Therefore, ontological naturalism is false.

I have already argued for premise (2). However, why believe that premise (1) holds? Let ontological naturalism be the idea that everything that exists is material, or else strongly supervenes upon the material. A material entity is any entity that is itself non-mental, non-mathematical (in the sense that it is not an abstract mathematical object), and yet it is in some way grounded, built up, determined, or comprised by or of ordinary objects commonly investigated by successful physical inquiry (i.e., particles, fields, and various other forms/structures of matter and massive and massless bodies).³⁹ Assuming the material is non-modal, following Hale (2013, p. 86, with some adjustments), I will express the idea that the modal strongly supervenes upon the material via the following:

[Fx: x has a non-modal material property; Mx: x has a modal property; when F is a part of a quantifier it ranges over non-modal properties, and when M is a part of a quantifier it ranges over modal properties]

- (4) $\blacksquare \forall x \forall y (\forall F (Fx \equiv Fy) \rightarrow \blacksquare \forall M (Mx \equiv My))$ [strong supervenience]⁴⁰

But (4) clearly and trivially entails:

- (5) $\blacksquare \forall x \forall y (\forall F (Fx \equiv Fy) \rightarrow \forall M (Mx \equiv My))$ [weak supervenience]⁴¹

If one can show that some modal properties do not even weakly supervene upon the non-modal, then it will follow that modal properties do not strongly supervene either. Barring the clearly mistaken view that modal properties are themselves material beings, ontological naturalism will come out false.

Suppose that necessitism holds. If an individual F_1 is an abstract individual that is possibly a fermion, and B_1 is an abstract individual that is possibly a boson, and each object exists at the actual world @, both F_1 and B_1 would be similar or indiscernible with respect to their non-modal profiles at @ (they will have the same material properties). However, the property *is possibly a fermion* would not weakly supervene on the material, for B_1 does not have that property despite being non-modally and materially similar to or indiscernible from F_1 . Because strong supervenience entails weak supervenience, the above result is bad news for ontological naturalism (the argument could be extended to many other modal properties, even natural modal ones).⁴²

What about atheism (the thesis that theism is false, or that there does not exist a supernatural, omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent creator of the universe)? A strong case can be made for the claim that modal notions and modal properties play

indispensable roles in our best physical theories. Here are but a few examples, only one of which I elaborate on here.

First, there exist configuration spaces in the formalism of Hamiltonian mechanics, classical statistical mechanics, and non-relativistic quantum mechanics. Points in these spaces represent possible states of physical systems. In the case of non-relativistic QM, one's physical theory must be outfitted with both the notions of a wave function ψ and a quantum state in order to have a proper interpretation (see Maudlin 2003, p. 463 "[a]ll 'interpretations' of quantum theory ... employ a quantum state or wave-function"). One defines the former notion over configuration space: "[t]he wave function of a system is...a complex-valued function *on the configuration space*, i.e. a function which assigns a complex number to each possible configuration" (Maudlin 2003, p. 462 emphasis mine), and its dynamics is given by the fundamental (to QM) dynamical Schrödinger equation: $i\hbar \partial\psi/\partial t = H\psi$. Configuration spaces are therefore indispensable entities laden with modal structure in wave QM.

As a second example, consider the modal notions that show up indispensably in the general theory of relativity (GTR). GTR represents our spacetime via a triple $(M, g_{\mu\nu}, T_{\mu\nu})$, where $T_{\mu\nu}$ indirectly represents the matter fields of spacetime, where $g_{\mu\nu}$ is the Lorentz (1, 3) signature metric which itself represents the metric and/or inertio-gravitational field, and where M represents the curved four-dimensional differentiable, smooth spacetime manifold featuring spacetime points or relativistic "events." The geometric structure of M includes smooth curves represented as maps in the formalism (e.g., the map $\gamma: I \rightarrow M$) that can be causal, time-like, or null-like. The time-like curves – when they are the straightest they can be in the curved spacetime – represent the possible paths of gravitating free massive bodies (i.e., bodies that aren't under the influences of any external forces). The null-like curves of extremal length represent the possible paths or trajectories of free photons or massless bodies. As Malament (2012, p. 121) notes in a related, but only slightly different context (he's concerned with images of curves, though the point, I believe applies more clearly as I've articulated it), the modality involved is essential. Not every geodesic actually is a path an appropriate body follows. Geodesics are themselves features of the geometric structure of M induced by the metric $g_{\mu\nu}$ (see Wald 1984, pp. 41–47).⁴³ That free massive and massless bodies traverse some actual geodesics of the spacetime metric is a dynamical law of GTR, one that follows from Einstein's fundamental (to GTR) interactive-dynamical field equations: $R_{\mu\nu} - \frac{1}{2}Rg_{\mu\nu} + \Lambda g_{\mu\nu} = 8\pi T_{\mu\nu}$.

Modality enters our best physical theorizing by way of the fundamental dynamical laws of those theories. But given that modal properties float free from the natural order of things in that they do not even supervene upon the non-modal, why should we expect that fact on atheism? That the laws of nature should be coordinated with modal properties that hang free of the physical world seems an utterly bizarre coincidence, one that pleads for an explanation. That coordination does not seem to be logically or metaphysically necessary, given that the laws of physics are themselves contingent. These considerations lead to what I call the *new coordination problem* in the philosophy of physics ("new" because it is distinct from the old problem of coordination involving the attempt to reconcile the special science laws that appear to be asymmetric, causal, and *ceteris paribus*, with the exceptionless, time-reversal invariant, and perhaps non-causal laws of micro-physics). It is a problem that I believe not only

involves modality and natural nomicity or lawfulness, but also metaphysical laws governing relations required by our best science (e.g., realization relations in Boltzmannian statistical mechanics *inter alia*). The problem runs so deep, that I believe it exists even if we grant ontological naturalism (I develop this idea in an unpublished manuscript “The Argument from Metaphysical Teleology”). But let us clearly state the problem and apply pressure:

The New Coordination Problem: Why is it that modal properties and notions enter the verisimilitudinous fundamental dynamical laws of our best and most empirically successful physical theories given that modal properties do not weakly supervene upon the physical or material? (or) How is it that the material world came to be ordered in such a way that it evolves in a manner that is best captured by modally laden physical theorizing or dynamical laws given that modal properties do not even weakly supervene upon the material and non-modal?

The coordination cannot receive a natural explanation for such explanations feature in their *explanans* the very laws themselves. We are interested in explaining why the laws are coordinated with modal properties. We cannot explain that fact by appeal to laws themselves else our explanation will look circular or uninformative. But if the coordination fact stands in need of an explanation, and it is not necessary, nor explicable natural-scientifically, what other explanation could there be? One might argue that whatever explains the laws of nature explains why they happen to be coordinated with modal properties and modal structure in the way they are. Some defenders of the Mill–Ramsey–Lewis best-systems account of laws (I have in mind the Humeans) maintain that those laws receive in explanation by way of truth-making. The laws are made true by the Humean mosaic, a particular structure consisting of point-like objects (or some suitable physical surrogate entities such as strings), their qualitative, and categorical properties together with the spatio-temporal relations in which such entities stand (see Lewis 1986; Loewer 2012). But that type of explanation removes puzzlement about the wrong explanandum. While, the mosaic may explain why the propositions expressing the laws are true, it does not explain why those laws feature the distinctive modal content they do given that the modal hangs free of the non-modal. Indeed, it is a doctrine of Humeanism that the modal supervenes upon the non-modal. We should therefore not expect such a view to be in the business of providing the requisite explanation.

If we were to survey other available types of explanation, we would see that nothing in the atheological wardrobe is fit for the job. This is because atheism does not provide the necessary explanatory equipment to do the job. I leave it as homework for the atheist to try to solve the new coordination problem. I’ve cut off a few preliminary paths.

Let me briefly summarize my argumentation:

- (6) Necessitism is true and modal properties are indispensable to our best physical theories.
- (7) If (6), then there is a new phenomenon of coordination (NPC).
- (8) Necessarily, (if there is an NPC, it has an explanation).

- (9) Necessarily, [if possibly both (atheism is true and there is an NPC), then it is not possible that the NPC has an explanation].
- (10) Therefore, atheism is false [see the proof of validity in Appendix 30A below]

I have argued for (6)–(8) in preceding discussion. But why think (9) holds? I've argued that atheism does not have enough explanatory power to account for the new coordination fact or facts, but why is it that the mere possible truth of the conjunction entails that there can't be an explanation of the NPC? Assume S5, and grant the antecedent of (9). There is a possible world w^* at which atheism holds and there is an NPC. That there is a theistic explanation of the NPC at w^* , that the laws of w^* are coordinated with a non-supervening modal fabric of reality because God weaved the relevant portions of the contingent reality of w^* that way, seems perfectly possible. So now there is a world w , accessible from w^* at which God explains the NPC (i.e., the very NPC that exists at w^*). However, at w^* the following holds: if there could be an explanation of the NPC, then there is an explanation of the NPC. This follows from a very plausible restriction of the principle of sufficient reason:

(C-PSR): Necessarily, for any contingent truth about the coordination of the physical with the non-physical p , if p could be explained, then p is explained.

I call this the coordination-PSR. It seems highly intuitive, and it enjoys some inductive support, though I'll leave the task of providing a full case for (C-PSR) for later. What we can infer, given C-PSR, is that the NPC at w^* has an explanation. The problem is that atheism is true there, and as I've argued, atheism seems to lack the resources to explain NPC. Thus, we face a contradiction unless we reject the thesis that there could be an explanation of NPC at w^* . Because the same reasoning we've applied here was applied to arbitrary worlds w^* and w with the relevant contents, and because the C-PSR is a necessary truth, it looks like we will be able to secure the same result at any world at which atheism holds and there is an NPC. Thus, from the perspective of any of those worlds, it must be impossible that the NPC has an explanation. That is premise (9).

One might counter that atheism could hold at w^* and yet some immensely (but finitely) powerful being, with an immense (though finite) amount of knowledge exercised control over the natural world, ensuring that it unfolded in a way that allowed for w^* 's natural world to be truthfully described and explained by modally laden laws. But Graham Oppy (2014, p. 1) has made a very strong case for the view that there is but one unique concept (not conception) of god, and that according to that concept: " ... to be a god is to be a superhuman being or entity who has and exercises power over the natural world ... in circumstances in which one is not, in turn, under the power of any higher ranking or more powerful category of beings." Very plausibly then, the imagined immensely powerful entity at w^* , just is a god, even if it does not fit the conception of God appearing in Western theistic traditions.⁴⁴

We therefore have a new type of logical consideration in favor of theism, one that is not a god-of-the-epistemic gaps argument. The suggestion here is that possibly there's something in need of an explanation, and that the explanatory gap cannot be bridged

by means of some natural-scientific explanation. The gap is therefore ontological and not epistemic. Resolution of the issue will not come by waiting for a more informed science. We are interested in the very natures of science and modality themselves. More empirical scientific success will only strengthen the case for coordination and make the problem for naturalism and atheism even more potent.

Conclusion

Our path was long and winding, but we arrived finally at a new logical argument for theism. The argument constitutes a truly logical objection to atheism in so far as it hinges upon the deliverance of classical logic that is necessitism. There are many rejoinders to be sure, but I hope I have at least sparked some debate on the question of whether atheism is truly scientifically respectable since it looks to be infected with the difficulty of being unable to make sense of the deliverances of a truly scientifically (and logically) informed analytic natural philosophy.

Notes

- 1 For a defense of the view that a system of logic should be specified (at least in part) by appeal to that system's rules of inference, see Rumfitt (2015, pp. 31–65).
- 2 See Hodges (2001), and Hughes and Cresswell (1996, pp. 235–244), though they call it the “lower predicate calculus.”
- 3 I have paraphrased these three principles from Grandy (2002, p. 531). Although Grandy uses the above principles to characterize what he calls “standard logic,” it is clear he has in mind classical logic, since he seems to use the relevant phrases interchangeably.
- 4 If your choice P-FFOL is dual domain (one outer and one inner), then my comments in the main text should be taken to be about the inner domain of purely existing objects. The outer domain is thought to be “comprised” of some nonexistent objects. Dual domain approaches to free logic abound. Indeed, a completeness proof for free logic assumes it (see LeBlanc and Thomason 1968).
- 5 Priest (2008, p. 104) notes that intuitionism yields a failure to verify several “standard logical principles – most notoriously, some instances of the law of excluded middle ...” My conception of classical logic departs from other treatments in the work of Field (2008) and Rumfitt (2015). What I've articulated above is closer to what Rumfitt calls “classical semantics” (Rumfitt 2015, pp. 10–11, but cf. p. 17).
- 6 See discussion of the relevant distinctions in Priest (2008, pp. 127–137).
- 7 See Rumfitt (2015, pp. 153–219) who delivers a full justification of CPL given an intuitionistic metalogic.
- 8 See the discussions in Linsky and Zalta (1994; 1996); and Williamson (1990; 2000; 2002; 2013). For criticism, see Hayaki (2006) and Sider (2009; 2016). See also the important discussion of the Barcan formula in Parsons (1994).
- 9 Carnap (1959, p. xv). Later would add, “*In logic there are no morals*. Everyone is at liberty to build up his own logic, i.e. his own form of language, as he wishes.” (1959, p. 52, emphasis in the original). Carnap used his view of logic to help enforce a ban on metaphysics, and also to resolve debates about the foundations of mathematics (see Richardson 1994 for commentary and especially p. 69 on various uses of differing languages).

- 10 In Nolt's (2014, Section 1.2) explication of the differences between free and classical predicate logic he never cites any differences having to do with how to understand the connectives or the quantifiers. He notes, what I have, that the quantifier rules are restricted in free logic.
- 11 Call this brand of pluralism *weak pluralism*. For criticisms of this pluralism see Bueno and Shalkowski (2009, pp. 296–306). And for another recent articulation of a logical pluralism I will not be engaged with, see Shapiro (2014).
- 12 This is very much in the spirit of the notion of logical consequence in Tarski (1983, p. 417), although Tarski appealed to models.
- 13 What makes a precisification of "situation," and therefore the account of consequence employing that precisification *admissible* is the fact that it is (i) suitably formal (see Beall and Restall 2006, pp. 41–43), and (ii) normative, (iii) necessary, and (iv) such that it plays the consequence role (pp. 40–44).
- 14 These examples show up in Bueno and Shalkowski (2009, p. 295) as well.
- 15 What Beall and Restall (2000, pp. 480–481n.8; 2006, pp. 75–77) actually suggest is that the free logician might be able to understand "situation" in terms of Phillip Bricker's (2001) world classes. A world class is nothing above and beyond a single possible world with causally isolated and detached spatio-temporal parts themselves understood as Lewisian concrete possible worlds. If LCS is modified such that it affirms that a deductive argument is valid, just in case, there is no world class in which the premises are true and the conclusion false, and there is an empty world class, then one is dealing with a free logic (Beall and Restall (2000, pp. 481n.8). Since Bricker's approach requires the truth of possibilism, I refer the reader to footnote 26 below.
- 16 Lambert (2001b, p. 246) puts the principle this way: "an object can have properties without having being."
- 17 Unless the arguments provided could go through on even the relevant competing logics.
- 18 I consider this argument to be one very much in the spirit of Putnam's (1979, pp. 72–73) famous work. Like him, I am seeking to provide a new analogue of the success argument for scientific realism.
- 19 For discussions of the (no) miracles/success argument for scientific realism, see Devitt (2005); Laudan (1981); Putnam (1978; 1979); and van Fraassen (1980, pp. 23–25, 34–40).
- 20 One might wonder what logic I'm assuming in my defense of (4). The answer is any logic able to countenance modus ponens, and conjunction.
- 21 Brian P. McLaughlin (1997, p. 219) has said, "... no one knows how to do calculus without classical logic, and no one knows how to do physics without calculus." This may be a bit of an overstatement. Constructive mathematicians have not only developed ways of "doing the calculus," but they have also gone beyond calculus to functional analysis (see Beeson 1985; Bishop 1967; and Bridges 1979).
- 22 They are linear because they abide by a set of conditions articulated in Shankar (1994, p. 18); bounded because the Hilbert space involved is finitely dimensional; symmetrical because the operator T is such that $T^* \supseteq T$, self-adjoint because $T^* = T$ and essentially self-adjoint because $T \subset T^{**} = T^*$, given certain conditions on T^* for which see Jauch (1968, p. 41).
- 23 Prugovečki (1971, p. 180) tells us that "most of the operators of interest in quantum physics are unbounded."
- 24 The general point is made by Heathcote (1990). Its application to constructivist QM was noted by Hellman (1997, p. 123).
- 25 There is nothing about intuitionism that should cause one to deny that situations_i are possible worlds. Priest (2008, pp. 105–107) has articulated a possible worlds semantics for

- intuitionism. Fineness of grain problems have already been articulated in numerous places, but see Soames (2009).
- 26 I will ignore Lewis's (1986) possibilism in this paper. For objections to the counterpart theory that is at the heart of Lewis's possibilism, see Fara and Williamson (2005). I also ignore the approach to QML that restricts it to haecceities (as in Plantinga 1974, pp. 70–87). For objections to that view, see Williamson (2013, pp. 267–296, and, esp. pp. 288–289, which takes you from haecceities to necessitism).
- 27 For arguments along these lines see Hale (2013, pp. 127–131).
- 28 "On the fixed domain interpretation, the sentence $\forall x \Box \exists y (x = y)$ (which reads 'everything exists necessarily') is valid" (Garson 1991, p. 112).
- 29 The CK stands for the classical constant domain K system of quantified modal logic. I adopt the classical K tableaux system of Priest (2008).
- 30 There must be a proof like this in the literature somewhere. The nearest and most similar reasoning I could recently find is in Hale's (2013, pp. 207–208) work. See also Linsky and Zalta (1994, p. 452n.11).
- 31 This is hardly surprising. "The constant domain assumption implies that whatever exists in the actual world exists necessarily, that is in all possible worlds" (Schurz 2002, p. 468).
- 32 What about Kripke's (1971) system that did away with singular and virtually all other referring terms? Did he not show how one could keep the classical quantifier rules and yet work inside a varying domain QML? Kripke's (1971) system gave up on the unrestricted rule of necessitation, not just constants and/or singular terms. This makes Kripke's resulting system non-normal. If he had kept that rule in his system one could derive in it $\Box (\exists y)(x = y)$ from the empty set of propositional parameters (Garson 1991, p. 114) read (as Kripke reads it) in terms of its universal closure.
- 33 "The converse Barcan formula ... is a Q1K-theorem" (Schurz 2002, p. 464, cf. 468; cf. Cresswell 2001, pp. 150–151; Garson 1991, pp. 114–115).
- 34 Several authors have attempted to preserve the classical quantifier rules while embracing a normal (with an unrestricted rule of necessitation) varying domain QML via an appeal to the nested domain constraint (see Bowen 1979, pp. 8–15, esp. p. 8; Gabbay 1976, pp. 44–60, but particularly p. 44; cf. the discussion in Schurz 2002, p. 468).
- 35 If your choice QML is as strong as S5, the accessibility relation will be symmetric, and the same entailment will hold. This is not the case for S4, since the accessibility relation in that system is merely reflexive and transitive (Sider 2010, p. 140).
- 36 See also the comments in Garson (1991, p. 111); and Hale (2013, p. 209), who opts for a negative free logic.
- 37 Again, see Hellman (1998, p. 441) and the discussion there of the Intermediate Value Theorem, though he has in mind constructive math and classically based math.
- 38 These results appear to be well known in the literature on negative free quantified modal logic. I'm not saying anything new here.
- 39 This doctrine may be close to a type of physicalist thesis, but it is one standard way of understanding ontological naturalism (see the discussion in Papineau 2016, Section 1.1).
- 40 In English: Necessarily for any entity x and for any entity y , [(if for any material property F , (x has F , just in case, y has F), then necessarily, for any modal property M , (x has M , just in case, y has M)).
- 41 In English: Necessarily for any entity x and for any entity y , [(if for any material property F , (x has F , just in case, y has F), then for any modal property M , (x has M , just in case, y has M)).
- 42 The above argument shares some affinities with that of Williamson (2013, pp. 385–389). Williamson would go on to suggest that his argument could be resisted given a radical

type of anti-essentialism. I think the anti-essentialism he sketches is too radical. Space constraints do not permit criticism here.

- 43 You can also take Malament's case of the images of the smooth curves understood as world-lines. He wrote about such a case, "... the modal character of the assertions (i.e., the reference to possibility) is essential. It is simply not true ... that all images of smooth, time-like curves *are*, in fact, the world-lines of massive particles. The claim is that, as least so far as the laws of relativity theory are concerned, they *could* be." Malament (2012, p. 121, emphasis in the original).
- 44 One might counter that w^* may be a world according to which a finitely immensely powerful and knowledgeable being was under the influence, or control, or command of a being belonging to a "more powerful category of beings". But then, that entity would fit the unique concept of god.
- 45 See Hughes and Cresswell (1996, p. 42).

Appendix 30A Validity Proof of Argument (6)–(10)

Let N be the statement that necessitism is true.

Let I stand for the statement that modal properties are indispensable to our best physical theories.

Let C be the statement that there is an NPC.

Let E be the statement that the NPC has an explanation.

Let A be the statement that atheism is true.

(1)	$N \ \& \ I$	Premise $\therefore \sim A$
(2)	$(N \ \& \ I) \rightarrow C$	Premise
(3)	$\blacksquare(C \rightarrow E)$	Premise
(4)	$\blacksquare[\Diamond(A \ \& \ C) \rightarrow \sim \Diamond E]$	Premise
(5)	A	Assumption
(6)	C	MP (1), (2)
(7)	$C \rightarrow E$	Nec. Elim. (3)
(8)	E	MP (6), (7)
(9)	$\Diamond(A \ \& \ C) \rightarrow \sim \Diamond E$	Nec. Elim (4)
(10)	$\Diamond E$	Rule T1 (8) ⁴⁵
(11)	$\sim \sim \Diamond E$	DN (10)
(12)	$\sim \Diamond(A \ \& \ C)$	MT (9), (11)
(13)	$\blacksquare \sim(A \ \& \ C)$	Duality of Modal Operators (12)
(14)	$\sim(A \ \& \ C)$	Nec. Elim (13)
(15)	$\sim A \vee \sim C$	DeM (14)
(16)	$\sim \sim C$	DN (6)
(17)	$\sim A$	DS (15), (16)
(18)	$A \ \& \ \sim A$	Conj. (5), (17)
(19)	$A \rightarrow (A \ \& \ \sim A)$	CP (5)-(18)
(20)	$\sim A$	Reductio (19)

Again, notice that it also follows from this argument that given atheism, atheism is incompatible with a certain fact, viz., the NPC.

References

- Beall, J., and Restall, G. (2000) "Logical pluralism." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 78: 475–493.
- Beall, J., and Restall, G. (2006) *Logical Pluralism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Beeson, M. (1985) *Foundations of Constructive Mathematics: Meta-Mathematical Studies*. Berlin: Springer.
- Bencivenga, E. (2002) "Putting language first: The liberation of logic from ontology," in D. Jacquette (ed.) *A Companion to Philosophical Logic*. Malden: Blackwell, pp. 293–304.
- Billinge, H. (2000) "Applied constructive mathematics: On Hellman's 'Mathematical Constructivism in Spacetime.'" *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 51: 299–318.
- Bishop, E. (1967) *Foundations of Constructive Analysis*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Bowen, K. (1979) *Model Theory for Modal Logic: Kripke Models for Modal Predicate Calculi*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Bricker, P. (2001) "Island universes and the analysis of modality," in G. Preyer and F. Siebelt (eds.) *Reality and Humean Supervenience: Essays on the Philosophy of David Lewis*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 27–56.
- Bridges, D. (1979) *Constructive Functional Analysis*. London: Pitman.
- Bridges, D. (1995) "Constructive mathematics and unbounded operators – a reply to Hellman." *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 24: 549–561.
- Bridges, D. (1999) "Can constructive mathematics be applied in physics?" *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 28: 439–453.
- Bridges, D., and Palmgren, E. (2013) "Constructive mathematics." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2013/entries/mathematics-constructive/> (accessed 21 September 2018).
- Bueno, O., and Shalkowski, S. (2009) "Modalism and logical pluralism." *Mind* 118: 295–321.
- Burgess, J. (1992) "Proofs about proofs: A defense of classical logic, Part I: The aims of classical logic," in M. Detlefsen (ed.) *Proof, Logic, and Formalization*. New York: Routledge, pp. 1–23.
- Burgess, J. (2009) *Philosophical Logic*. Princeton Foundations of Contemporary Philosophy. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Carnap, R. (1959) *The Logical Syntax of Language*, trans. A. Smeaton. Paterson: Littlefield, Adams.
- Church, A. (1996) *Introduction to Mathematical Logic*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Church, A. (2009) "Referee reports on Fitch's 'A Definition of Value,'" in J. Salerno (ed.) *New Essays on the Knowability Paradox*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 13–20.
- Crane, T. (2013) *The Objects of Thought*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Cresswell, M. (2001) "Modal logic," in L. Goble (ed.) *The Blackwell Guide to Philosophical Logic*. Malden: Blackwell, pp. 136–158.
- Devitt, M. (2005) "Scientific realism," in F. Jackson and M. Smith (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 767–790.
- Fara, M., and Williamson, T. (2005) "Counterparts and actuality." *Mind* 114: 1–30.
- Field, H. (2008) *Saving Truth from Paradox*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Field, H. (2009) "Pluralism in logic." *Review of Symbolic Logic* 2: 342–359.
- Fitch, F. (1963) "A logical analysis of some value concepts." *Journal of Symbolic Logic* 28: 135–142.
- Gabbay, D. (1976) *Investigations in Modal and Tense Logics with Applications to Problems in Philosophy and Linguistics*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel.
- Garson, J. (1984) "Quantification in modal logic," in D. Gabbay and F. Guenther (eds.) *Handbook of Philosophical Logic*, Vol. 2, AA. Dordrecht: Springer, 249–307.
- Garson, J. (1991) "Applications of free logic to quantified intensional logic," in K. Lambert (ed.) *Philosophical Application of Free Logic*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 111–142.

- Grandy, R. (2002) "Many-valued, free, and intuitionistic logics," in D. Jacquette (ed.) *A Companion to Philosophical Logic*. Malden: Blackwell, pp. 531–544.
- Hale, B. (2013) *Necessary Beings: An Essay on Ontology, Modality, and the Relations Between Them*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hart, W., and McGinn, C. (1976) "Knowledge and necessity." *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 5: 205–208.
- Hawking, S., and Penrose, R. (1970) "The singularities of gravitational collapse and cosmology." *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London, Series A, Mathematical and Physical Sciences* 314: 529–548.
- Hayaki, R. (2006) "Contingent objects and the Barcan formula." *Erkenntnis* 64: 75–83.
- Heathcote, A. (1990) "Unbounded operators and the incompleteness of quantum mechanics." *Philosophy of Science* 57: 523–534.
- Hellman, G. (1993a) "Gleason's Theorem is not constructively provable." *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 22: 193–203.
- Hellman, G. (1993b) "Constructive mathematics and quantum mechanics: Unbounded operators and the Spectral Theorem." *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 22: 221–248.
- Hellman, G. (1997) "Quantum mechanical unbounded operators and constructive mathematics: A rejoinder to Bridges." *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 26: 121–127.
- Hellman, G. (1998) "Mathematical constructivism in spacetime." *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 49: 425–450.
- Herbrand, J. (1971) "Investigations in proof theory," trans. B. Dreben, W. Goldfarb, and J. van Heijenoort in *Logical Writings*, ed. W. Goldfarb. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 44–202.
- Hodges, W. (2001) "Classical logic I – First-order logic," in L. Goble (ed.) *Blackwell Guide to Philosophical Logic*. Malden: Blackwell, pp. 9–32.
- Hughes, G. and Cresswell, M. (1996) *A New Introduction to Modal Logic*. New York: Routledge.
- Jauch, J. (1968) *Foundations of Quantum Mechanics*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.
- King, J. (2002) "Designating propositions." *Philosophical Review* 111: 341–371.
- Kripke, S. (1971) "Semantical considerations on modal logic," in L. Linsky (ed.) *Reference and Modality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 63–72. Original work published 1963 in *Acta Philosophica Fennica*.
- Kvanvig, J. (2006) *The Knowability Paradox*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lambert, K. (2001a) "Free logics," in Lou Goble (ed.) *Blackwell Guide to Philosophical Logic*. Malden: Blackwell, pp. 258–279.
- Lambert, K. (2001b) "Comments," in E. Morscher and A. Hieke (eds.) *New Essays in Free Logic: In Honour of Karel Lambert*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, pp. 239–252.
- Laudan, L. (1981) "A confutation of convergent realism." *Philosophy of Science* 48: 19–49.
- LeBlanc, H. and Thomason, R. (1968) "Completeness theorems for some presupposition-free logics." *Fundamenta Mathematicae* 62: 125–164.
- Lewis, D. (1986) *On the Plurality of Worlds*. Malden: Blackwell.
- Linsky, B., and Zalta, E. (1994) "In defense of the simplest quantified modal logic." *Philosophical Perspectives*, Vol. 8, *Logic and Language*, pp. 431–458.
- Linsky, B., and Zalta, E. (1996) "In defense of the contingently nonconcrete." *Philosophical Studies* 84: 283–294.
- Loewer, B. (2012) "Two accounts of laws and time." *Philosophical Studies* 160: 115–137.
- Malament, D. (1982) "Review of *Science without Numbers* by Hartry Field." *Journal of Philosophy* 79, 523–534.
- Malament, D. (2012) *Topics in the Foundations of General Relativity and Newtonian Gravitation Theory*. Chicago Lectures in Physics, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Maudlin, T. (2003) "Distilling metaphysics from quantum physics," in M. Loux and D. Zimmerman (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 461–487.
- McLaughlin, B. (1997) "Supervenience, vagueness, and determination." *Noûs* 31 (Suppl.): *Philosophical Perspectives* 11, Mind, Causation, and World: 209–230.
- Merricks, T. (2007) *Truth and Ontology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Merricks, T. (2015) *Propositions*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Moreland, J. (2001) *Universals*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Nolt, J. (2014) "Free logic." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/logic-free/> (accessed 23 October 2018).
- Oppy, G. (2014) *Describing Gods: An Investigation of Divine Attributes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Papineau, D. (2009) "Naturalism." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2009/entries/naturalism/> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Parsons, T. (1994) "Ruth Barcan Marcus and the Barcan formula," in W. Sinnott-Armstrong (ed.) *Modality, Morality, and Belief: Essays in Honour of Ruth Barcan Marcus*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 3–11.
- Paśniczek, J. (2001) "Can Meinongian logic be free?," in E. Morscher and A. Hieke (eds.) *New Essays in Free Logic: In Honour of Karel Lambert*, Applied Logic Series, Vol. 23. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 227–238.
- Plantinga, A. (1974) *The Nature of Necessity*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Pour-El, M., and Richards, I. (1983) "Non-computability in analysis and physics: A complete determination of the class of non-computable linear operator." *Advances in Mathematics* 48: 44–74.
- Priest, G. (2008) *An Introduction to Non-Classical Logic: From If to Is*, 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Priest, G. (2009) "Beyond the limits of knowledge," in J. Salerno (ed.) *New Essays on the Knowability Paradox*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 93–104.
- Prugovečki, E. (1971) *Quantum Mechanics in Hilbert Space*. New York: Academic Press.
- Putnam, H. (1978) *Meaning and the Moral Sciences*. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Putnam, H. (1979) *Mathematics Matter and Method*, Philosophical Papers, Vol. 1, 2nd edn. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Richardson, A. (1994) "The limits of tolerance: Carnap's logico-philosophical project in logical syntax of language." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 68 (Suppl.): 67–83.
- Riesz, F., and Sz-Nagy, B. (1990) *Functional Analysis*, 2nd edn, trans. L. Boron. New York: Dover.
- Rumfitt, I. (2015) *The Boundary Stones of Thought: An Essay in the Philosophy of Logic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Russell, B. (1920) *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Salerno, J. (2009a) "Introduction," in J. Salerno (ed.) *New Essays on the Knowability Paradox*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 1–10.
- Salerno, J. (2009b) "Knowability noir: 1945–1963," in J. Salerno (ed.) *New Essays on the Knowability Paradox*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 29–48.
- Schurz, G. (2002) "Alethic modal logics and semantics," in D. Jacquette (ed.) *A Companion to Philosophical Logic*. Malden: Blackwell, pp. 442–477.
- Schwarz, W. (2013) "Generalising Kripke semantics for quantified modal logics." Available at <http://www.umsu.de/papers/generalising.pdf> (accessed 21 September 2018).
- Shankar, R. (1994) *The Principles of Quantum Mechanics*, 2nd edn. New York: Springer.
- Shapiro, S. (2014) *Varieties of Logic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sider, T. (2009) "Williamson's many necessary existents." *Analysis* 69: 250–258.
- Sider, T. (2010) *Logic for Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sider, T. (2011) *Writing the Book of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Sider, T. (2016) "On Williamson and simplicity in modal logic." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 46: 683–698.
- Soames, S. (2009) "Why propositions can't be sets of truth-supporting circumstances," in *Philosophical Essays: The Philosophical Significance of Language*, Vol. 2. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 72–80.
- Stalnaker, R. (1976) "Propositions," in A. MacKay and D. Merrill (eds.) *Issues in the Philosophy of Language: Proceedings of the 1972 Oberlin Colloquium in Philosophy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 79–91.
- Tarski, A. (1983) *Logic, Semantics, Meta-mathematics: Papers from 1923 to 1938*, 2nd edn, trans. J. Woodger, ed. and intro. by J. Corcoran. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Troelstra, A., and van Dalen, D. (1988) *Constructivism in Mathematics: An Introduction*, Vol. 1. Amsterdam: North Holland.
- Van Dalen, D. (2001) "Intuitionistic logic," in L. Goble (ed.) *Blackwell Guide to Philosophical Logic*. Malden: Blackwell, pp. 224–257.
- Van Fraassen, B. (1980) *The Scientific Image*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wald, R. (1984) *General Relativity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Weinberg, S. (2013) *Lectures on Quantum Mechanics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Williamson, T. (1990) "Necessary identity and necessary existence," in R. Haller and J. Brandl (eds.) *Wittgenstein – Eine Neubewertung towards a Re-evaluation*. Berlin: Springer, pp. 168–175.
- Williamson, T. (1998) "Bare possibilities." *Erkenntnis* 48: 257–273.
- Williamson, T. (2000). *Knowledge and its Limits*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Williamson, T. (2002) "Necessary existents," in A. O'Hear (ed.) *Logic, Thought and Language*, Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement 51. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 233–251.
- Williamson, T. (2013) *Modal Logic as Metaphysics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ye, F. (2000) "Toward a constructive theory of unbounded linear operators." *Journal of Symbolic Logic* 65: 357–370.

Evidential Objections to Atheism

HELEN DE CRUZ

A large literature in the philosophy of religion has considered the question of whether religious belief, in particular theism, is rational or justified. The question of whether atheism is a rational position does not enjoy quite the same level of attention. Some authors (e.g., Plantinga 2000) have argued that atheism is not a coherent position to take, because scientific naturalism (the position most often associated with atheism) would be epistemically self-undermining. But by and large, there is an implicit assumption that atheism is *prima facie* plausible, and that the burden of proof lies mostly or entirely upon the theist. Belief in God is sometimes likened to belief in a teapot in outer space (Russell 1969, p. 6), or some other exotic proposition with low *prima facie* plausibility (Garvey 2010). One way to adjudicate whether atheism is indeed *prima facie* plausible is to consider evidence against the position. Evidence against the atheist position would, if successful, shift the burden of proof at least somewhat toward the atheist.

This paper considers evidential objections to atheism. In what follows, I distinguish between global and local atheism. The next section examines what counts as an evidential objection. I then survey two arguments against global atheism: the common consent argument and the argument from religious experience. I look at the strengths and weaknesses of these objections, and conclude that they pose a challenge to the global atheist position.

Global and Local Forms of Atheism

To evaluate evidential objections to atheism, I will first clarify what atheism means. If atheism means the denial of all forms of theism, it would amount to denying a massive conjunction, because there are many different forms of theism (Diller 2016).

Although philosophers of religion commonly understand theism in a fairly thin, Anselmian sense, where God is omnibenevolent, omniscient, and omnipotent (see Nagasawa 2011 for an overview and defense of this concept), there are also theistic concepts that feature, for example, many gods who are more limited in scope (e.g., Steinhart 2012). Moreover, there are fine-grained distinctions such as open theism, panentheism, and Molinism. Each of these proposes a subtly different conception of God. Because the disjunction of all theisms contains many contradictory statements, any form of theism will have to be specific, which Diller (2016) terms “local theism.” Unlike theism, which always needs to be specific, atheism can coherently be understood as either local or global atheism. Global atheism denies the existence of any God (and hence, by De Morgan’s theorem, is conjunctive, as it says that the God of Aquinas does not exist, and the God of Wolterstorff does not exist, and the God of Vedanta Hinduism does not exist, etc.). Local atheism denies the existence of a particular concept of God, for example, the Anselmian omni-God, the gods of Hellenistic polytheism, or Spinozist pantheism.

Many evidential arguments against God’s existence assume local, not global atheism. For example, Schellenberg’s (2006; 2007) divine hiddenness argument assumes that if there were a God, that God would be perfectly loving. This provides the basis for Schellenberg’s claim that no perfectly loving God would allow for non-resistant non-belief, which occurs when people fail, through no fault of their own, to believe in God. As there is non-resistant nonbelief, God does not exist. Rea (2015) has argued that Schellenberg doesn’t merely assume God to be perfectly loving, he also presupposes a very peculiar, perhaps modern Western notion, of what such perfect love would entail. Indeed, Rea thinks that Schellenberg’s claims are not commitments of traditional Christian theology and thus that his argument is one against a straw representation of God. But it is clear that even a more charitable reading of Schellenberg (2006; 2007) cannot rule out all forms of theism: we may be mistaken about God’s love. Instead of a loving deity, it may well be that we are instead faced with a cold, distant God who is nonetheless the creator of everything that is, and who is also omniscient and omnipotent, merely lacking omnibenevolence. Some understandings of the divine are even more remote, e.g., Brahman (ultimate reality) isn’t a person according to some strands of Hinduism, and many other notions don’t see God/the gods as a creator (e.g., Wicca).

Evidential arguments from evil are also arguments for local, not global atheism. For example, Rowe’s (1979, p. 336) evidential argument from evil states that there exist instances of intense suffering which an ‘omniscient, wholly good being’ could prevent without thereby losing some greater good or permitting an evil that is equally bad or worse. A fawn suffering pointlessly in a forest fire would be an instance of such evil. Rowe explicitly argued against theism in the narrow sense (local theism), and for atheism in the narrow sense (that is, atheism that states that there is no God with Anselmian omni-properties).

Evidential objections against atheism will therefore need to specify whether they are objections to global or to local atheism, and, if the latter, which form of atheism they target. As we will see in the course of this paper, some evidential objections, such as the *consensus gentium* (the argument from common consent), are leveled against global atheism. If successful, these objections make global atheism a less justified position.

However, they do not clearly favor one theism over another. By contrast, other evidential objections are meant to undermine more local atheisms. For example, the argument from miracles can be understood as an argument for (some form of) theism. Many different religious traditions affirm miracles, ranging from the miraculous drinking of milk offerings by statues of Ganesh and other Hindu deities (Subramuniyaswami 2000), to the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. McGrew and McGrew (2009) argue that there is strong evidence that Jesus resurrected, which would raise the probability of theism, and more specifically of Christianity (although some authors, such as Overall [1985] have argued that miracles would constitute evidence against the existence of God). Thus the argument from miracles, if successful, would undermine local atheism, namely the claim that the God of Christian theism does not exist.

Diller (2016) has argued that all atheists should be local atheists, not global atheists, until they have put in the work of denying all the significant local theisms on offer (not just the ones currently popular in philosophy). Yet many atheists “seem to think their job is done when they have, to their own satisfaction, criticized personalistic, *agential* conceptions of a divine reality” (Schellenberg 2015, p.15, emphasis in original). For this reason, philosophical objections against global atheism are important. For if an evidential objection to global atheism is plausible, that means that one or more of the local theisms could be true. This would be a significant finding for the theist, even if she can thereby not establish which theistic position is more likely to be true. Moreover, global atheism is the more pressing position to refute for the theist, since global atheism entails the denial of any form of local theism. Therefore, I will concentrate on evidential objections to global atheism.

Evidential Objections

What would it mean to have evidence against atheism – that is, evidence against the claim that no God exists (global atheism), or that a particular view of God is false (local atheism)? Philosophers use the term “evidence” in different ways. Some definitions of evidence are quite narrow, so as to include only publicly available evidence that can be stated in a propositional format. Under this narrow view, the proposition “The universe has a temporal origin” might be used as evidence against atheism (for example, in the cosmological argument, where it is used together with some assumptions about causation and temporal origins). However, the narrow view excludes many things that we would plausibly consider as evidence. For example, if I have a strong, ineffable religious experience that God exists, is present, and loves me, it would not constitute evidence for God’s existence under the narrow view, as it cannot be adequately captured in a propositional format and is not publicly available.

A recent influential version of the conception of evidence as propositional knowledge is Williamson’s (2000, especially Chapter 9) E=K principle, also known as the knowledge-first principle. Williamson equates evidence with knowledge. On this view, an agent’s evidence is what she knows. Knowledge provides a modest foundation for one’s justified beliefs. This definition excludes phenomenal evidence such as religious experience. Williamson (2000, p. 194) agrees with the claim that ‘only propositions

can be reasons for belief'. More specifically, he argues that the following three theses are true, and that they jointly imply $E = K$:

- (1) All evidence is propositional.
- (2) All propositional evidence is knowledge.
- (3) All knowledge is evidence.

Religious experiences would only count as evidence/knowledge to the extent that they can be formulated in a propositional format. Williamson (2000, p. 197) explicitly rejects the idea that experience *itself* can be evidence. However, as Brueckner (2005) argues, this is problematic because it would mean that even an experience that could be placed in propositional format cannot, by itself, function as evidence. For example, suppose I see that there are apples in my apple tree. If my perceptual experience cannot play an evidential role, my basis for believing there are apples in the apple tree is the proposition "There are apples in the apple tree," rather than my perception of apples in the tree.

A broader view on evidence is the phenomenal conception of evidence, which equates the evidence an agent has with her phenomenal state(s). Phenomenal conservatism holds that if it seems to a subject *S* that *p*, she has a defeasible reason to believe that *p* (Huemer 2001, Pryor 2000). For example, if it seems to Sally (as a result of her visual perception) that a cat sits on the road on her way to work, this provides her with a defeasible reason to believe there is a cat on the road. Dougherty and Tweedt (2015) propose that seeming states like these are not beliefs, that they are not self-evident and not certain, but that they do constitute evidence. Seemings can play a distinct evidential role in philosophy of religion. For example, Gellmann (1992) has argued that just like there is an experience of God's existence, there is an experience of God's nonexistence, in the form of evils: seeing some horrible evil occur, such as the suffering of a child with an incurable disease, can provide a strong seeming of God's nonexistence. And this seeming constitutes evidence against some local theisms (especially those that see God as omnipotent and omnibenevolent) under the phenomenal conception of evidence. For the purposes of this paper, I will consider both propositions and phenomenal states as potential evidence.

Theistic Belief as an Evidential Objection against Global Atheism

The idea that widespread theistic belief could constitute an evidential objection to atheism has an ancient history. The common consent argument for God's existence, also known as *Consensus Gentium*, was a popular argument for theism, with proponents such as Cicero, Gassendi, and Calvin. In the early modern period, it rivalled the design argument in popularity (Reid 2015).

A basic – quite strong – formulation of the *Consensus Gentium* is as follows (Rollins 2015, p. 84):

- P1 Belief in God is (nearly) universal.
 - P2 For any given proposition *p*, if belief in *p* is (nearly) universal, *p* must be true.
 - P3 So, if belief in God(s) is (nearly) universal, God(s) must exist.
- ∴ God must exist.

In many cases, the mere prevalence of a belief constitutes no evidence that this belief is true. Mistaken beliefs about the shape of the earth, the causes of disease, or the intellectual capacities of women have been widespread. The Consensus Gentium does not merely say that belief in God is widespread. It amounts to the more specific claim that theistic belief is remarkably stable across times and cultures. This stability is taken as *prima facie* evidence for some local theism. As Cicero wrote in 45 BCE:

Time destroys the figments of the imagination, while confirming the judgments of nature, and that is why both in our own nation and in others the worship of the gods and the holy observances of religion are increasing daily in extent and worthiness. And so upon the main point all men of all nations are agreed, for the existence of the gods is an idea natural to all, and engraven, as it were, upon the mind (Cicero 1967, Book II).

Even in this more specific form (where P1 can be reformulated as P1* “Belief in God is (nearly) universal, and has been so across times and cultures”), the Consensus Gentium remains controversial, because it does not seem plausible that beliefs that are universal and stable over time *must* be true (P2). However, the weaker claim that universality and stability of a belief provides *prima facie* higher-order evidence for the truth of that belief is more plausible. Thus P2 can be revised as P2*, “For any given proposition *p*, if belief in *p* is (nearly) universal, this constitutes *prima facie* evidence for *p*,” and P3* as “So, if belief in God(s) is (nearly) universal this constitutes evidence for the existence of God(s).”

The Consensus Gentium cannot be an argument for global theism because, as we have seen, global theism would comprise many mutually contradictory positions (e.g., monotheism and polytheism) and is thus not internally coherent. It is not an argument for a local theism either, because it does not specify whether there is one or many gods, or what attributes those gods may have. Indeed, proponents of the Consensus Gentium, such as Calvin (1960), need to explain why there are so many mutually incompatible religious beliefs. Calvin did this by appealing to the noetic effects of sin: the Fall would have marred the capacity of many people to truly know God, leading to many corrupted, incorrect religious beliefs (e.g., animism, polytheism). The most straightforward way to understand the Consensus Gentium argument is as an argument against global atheism, rather than an argument for theism. This may be less ambitious than the traditional version of the argument, but it requires fewer tweaks or appeals to specific religious concepts such as the noetic effects of sin.

The Consensus Gentium has seen a revival in the wake of a renewed interest in trust and testimony in social epistemology. Kelly (2011) and Zagzebski (2011) have examined whether testimony to a factual claim – in this case, that one or more gods exist – provides evidence for that claim. Kelly (2011) argues that universal or widespread agreement for a claim that *p* provides defeasible evidence for *p*. Zagzebski (2011) formulates a contemporary Consensus Gentium argument on the basis of self-trust: we have a natural desire for truth, which makes it reasonable to trust ourselves. But since others also share this desire, we should extend this same trust to others. If a large majority of people believes that God exists, then their views should hold some weight. Zagzebski (2011) relies on an extension from self-trust to trusting others (see also Foley 2001). Fricker (2014) regards this move as highly problematic, because it assumes that others are epistemically like us, which is an empirical matter to decide and not something we

should take as a given. Moreover, in our personal lives, we are often left with no choice but to trust our own judgments, but extending this trust to others is not unavoidable in the same way:

Suppose the only way across a chasm, to escape a deadly predator, is over a rotten-looking bridge. So I have no choice but to rely on it to take my weight, taking a leap of epistemic faith in doing so. This in no way means that I am guilty of culpable inconsistency, if (having survived my ordeal!) I refuse to cross other similar, rotten-looking bridges, when I am not constrained by compelling practical motives to do so. I have no choice, we have maintained, but to place epistemic faith in my own faculties' reliability. This does not mean that I can or must also repose trust in others' faculties out of no more than epistemic faith. (Fricker 2014, p. 197)

However, the proponent of Consensus Gentium has resources to counter these objections. For one thing, evidence from the cognitive science of religion suggests that we are epistemically similar to other human beings in how we reason about the world and ultimate reality. Philosophers of religion might be subject to the same cognitive limitations (De Cruz and De Smedt 2015). Moreover, James (1896) argued that theistic belief is a forced option. If this is true, it would be like many people wagering to cross the rotten bridge rather than being eaten by the predator (to extend Fricker's dramatic thought experiment). This surely says something about people's assessment about the relative dangers of bridges and predators. If many people find themselves in the position where they have to choose between atheism (and agnosticism)¹ and theism and choose the theist option, and they have no reason to believe they are in an epistemically better position than the majority, it seems reasonable to extend trust in the majority's judgment, as they trust in the judgments they make themselves.

Kelly (2011) advances a version of the Consensus Gentium that is not based on trust, but that regards widespread religious belief as a form of evidence.² He proposes the following datum as the basis for the argument (p.151): "Datum: A strong supermajority [i.e., more than 60%] of the world's population believes that God exists." Kelly considers the possibility that the datum might be false – maybe Muslims, Jews, and Christians, for example, don't refer to the same God. He does not mount a full-fledged defense for why the datum would be true. However, if we see the Consensus Gentium as an argument against global atheism – that is, against the claim that no God or gods exist – we don't need anything as strong as Kelly's datum. We can go with a weaker claim, for instance:

Datum* A strong supermajority [i.e., about 90%] of the world's population thinks some form of theism is true.

This percentage is based on calculations in the cross-cultural surveys of theism by Zuckerman (2007). Datum* does not require that "God" functions semantically like a proper name (in the Kripkean sense), but merely that about 90% of the world's population believe in the existence of one or more gods. Given that any form of theism is included in Datum*, the percentage is also significantly higher than Kelly's original supermajority. If we assume that widespread belief constitutes *prima facie* evidence, Datum* provides evidence against global atheism.

Next to extending self-trust and seeing religious belief as evidence against global atheism, a third way to cash out the Consensus Gentium is in terms of synergy. Recent developments in formal epistemology suggest that under some circumstances, peer testimony in a credence that p “can provide mutually supporting evidence raising an individual’s credence higher than any peer’s initial prior report,” which Easwaran et al. (2016, p. 1) call synergy. Drawing on an example by Christensen (2009), Easwaran et al. (2016) argue that synergy is often a desirable update rule: if you are highly confident that p (say 0.97) and find that someone else is also highly confident (say, 0.95), it seems that the rational thing to do is not to split the difference (i.e., end up with a credence of 0.96), but to be even more confident that you are correct (in this case, your credence goes up to 0.998, following Easwaran et al.’s *Upco* rule).

Since the majority of people worldwide not only believe that God(s) exist(s), but are also confident God(s) exist(s), it would seem rational for a theist to see this as further evidence against global atheism. In a 2014 Pew Forum study (Pew Forum 2014), belief in God in the United States was at 89%, and about 63% believed in God with absolute certainty. If the population at large are taken as one’s epistemic peer, it would seem reasonable to be more confident in one’s pre-existing belief in God’s existence after learning that so many other people hold the same belief.

However, a key presupposition of synergy is that one is guided by the credences of one’s epistemic peers. A stringent notion of epistemic peerhood requires that peers have access to the same evidence (e.g., Feldman 2007). Accordingly, A and B are *evidential equals* with respect to question Q if they have access to the same evidence with respect to Q (Christensen 2007). This notion of evidential equality is a difficult criterion to meet in messy real-life situations. The notion of cognitive equality may be more easily satisfied. A and B are *cognitive equals* with respect to Q if they possess similar cognitive capacities and are subject to similar cognitive limitations (Lackey 2010).

Given that atheism increases with level of education, and that levels of atheism are high among people with PhDs and other university degrees, an educated atheist (I am here assuming an American atheist) could resist the Consensus Gentium as follows: my epistemic peers are not the “average” American, but the educated American. Among American university and college faculty, the percentage of atheists is a lot higher: in elite universities, the percentage of atheists and agnostics is about 60% (Ecklund and Scheitle 2007). But, against this reasoning, if the sample is expanded to also include teaching-intensive state colleges, small liberal arts colleges and community colleges, the percentage of faculty members who believe in God or a higher power is 75%, which is closer to the general US population (Gross and Simmons 2009). So, unless one only takes faculty members of elite universities as one’s epistemic peers, the demographics of atheism among the highly educated are not encouraging for the sophisticated atheist as she still has to contend with a supermajority of theist epistemic peers (and note that I have not provided reasons or arguments for assuming that epistemic sophistication about religion means being educated). Thus it is not clear whether the position of the sophisticated atheist would be rational. After all, as Christensen (2007) and others have argued, one’s assessment of the epistemic credentials of a purported peer should be independent of one’s reasoning on the disputed matter – one cannot simply doubt the assessment of one’s epistemic peer because it strikes one as a ludicrous position.

Another way to counter the Consensus Gentium is to look for alternative explanations of consensus. In many cases, the best explanation of consensus has to do with the truth of the belief in question. For example, if I see that people in my neighborhood have put out their bins on Thursday, instead of on Friday as usual, it seems reasonable to assume that they know that the bins will be collected one day early. According to Kelly (2011, p. 143) “the epistemic significance of the existence of consensus with respect to a given issue depends on how the existence of that consensus is best explained.”

Suppose that the best explanation for the prevalence of theistic belief is that God has instilled these beliefs in us. This is Calvin’s idea of the *sensus divinitatis*, taken up by contemporary Reformed epistemologists such as Plantinga (2000).³ Clark and Barrett (2010) use evidence from the cognitive science of religion to support Calvin’s ideas that neurotypical human cognition spontaneously and non-inferentially produces religious beliefs under a broad range of conditions. But Wilkins and Griffiths (2013) hold that the cognitive mechanisms that give rise to religious belief are unreliable. More specifically, they argue that religious belief is a by-product of mental adaptations for detecting agents in our environment: “These mechanisms are ‘hyperactive’, leading us to attribute natural events to a hidden agent or agents. So none of the contemporary evolutionary explanations of religious belief hypothesizes that those beliefs are produced by a mechanism that tracks truth” (pp. 142–143). If that were the case, common consent does not have any evidential value.

As I have argued elsewhere (e.g., De Cruz 2016; De Cruz and De Smedt 2015), the cognitive science of religion is currently not in a position to allow for such sweeping claims. For one thing, recent failures (e.g., Van Elk et al. 2016) to experimentally link the over-attribution of agency to religious belief cast doubt on the idea that religious belief is caused by hyperactive agency detection. Moreover, there are also naturalistic explanations for atheism that are independent of the truth or falsity of atheism (e.g., atheism seems to increase when people have more existential security and better social safety nets; see Zuckerman 2007). In the absence of clear defeaters of the eventual value of common consent for theism, the wide prevalence of theistic belief constitutes evidence against global atheism.

Religious Experience

Religious experiences have been the topic of philosophical discussion since James’s (1985) seminal *Varieties of Religious Experience* (published 1902), which features a substantial collection of first-personal accounts. The online archive of the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre (<http://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/alister-hardy-religious-experience-research-centre/online-archive/>, accessed 20 September 2018) is a more recent collection, featuring more than 6000 first-hand accounts of spiritual experiences, collected from 1969 to the present day. Here is an example of one such account in the archive:

My experience happened some years ago ... it happened during a period of prayer that I found myself going through a tense physical struggle somewhat similar to childbirth. I became suddenly aware of light rays about me. It frightened me, thinking that I had

entered a forbidden realm by mistake. But what happened to me was most wonderful. I actually felt that I was in tune with the entire universe. I became imbued with a feeling of unity toward all mankind. That feeling to a certain extent has stayed with me. It was a startling experience and I honestly felt that I had made a new discovery ... there is no doubt in my mind that God is a reality. (Anonymous)

Such experiences are not exceptional. A Pew Forum poll (Pew Forum 2009) found that 49% of American adults have had religious experiences, which is less than the percentage of Americans who self-identify with a religious or spiritual tradition (over 70%), or who believe in God (nearly 90%). What is the epistemic significance of such experiences? Several analytic philosophers, including Swinburne (2004) and Alston (1991), have tried to operationalize religious experiences. For example, Alston (1991, p. 77) frames the question of whether one can trust religious experiences in terms of the justification of M-beliefs, which are “a particular species of perceptual beliefs ... based on mystical perception, to the effect that God has some perceivable property or is engaging in some perceivable activity.” In spite of such definitional attempts, delineating religious experiences from other perceptions and experiences remains difficult. Do only seemings that are not part of sensory perception count (as Alston 1991 holds), or can we also categorize aesthetic experiences with a religious flavour as religious experiences?

Analytic philosophers of religion have argued that religious experiences can be regarded as evidence for the existence of God. Swinburne (2004, p. 303) formulated the principle of credulity: if it seems epistemically that *x* is present, then probably *x* is present. Alston (1991) framed the justification of M-experiences in terms of doxastic practices (socially accepted practices of belief formation). Many doxastic practices, such as sense perception, cannot be justified in a non-circular way – at some point, we refer to the practices when we justify beliefs made on the basis of them. Alston (1991) argued that forming beliefs on the basis of religious experiences could be rational, in the same way as sense perception is.

There are several potential problems with this approach. There is the question of whether religious experiences are analogous to sense perception. Recent anthropological work (e.g., Luhrmann (2012) suggests that ordinary sense perception is a poor analogy for mystical perception. Luhrmann’s fieldwork with evangelical Christians of the Vineyard Church suggests that some religious experience takes place in the context of deliberate practice, including solitary and collective prayer:

One of the first things a person must master at a church like the Vineyard is to recognize when God is present and when he responds ... Newcomers soon learn that God is understood to speak to congregants inside their own minds. They learn that someone who worships God at the Vineyard must develop the ability to recognize thoughts in their mind that are in fact not their thoughts, but God’s. They learn that this is a skill they must master (Luhrmann 2012, p. 39).

Similarly, autobiographical accounts such as Teresa of Avila’s *Interior Castle* show that religious experience requires practice and perseverance. Mystical perception is more akin to the exercise of an acquired, highly specialized skill, analogous to the skilled perceptions of scientists and art connoisseurs. Mystical practices are doxastic practices,

but it remains an open question whether they lead to justified beliefs. After all, there are many skilled doxastic practices that plausibly do not lead to justified beliefs, such as palmistry, aura reading, and astrology.

Do we need to take the testimony of people who have religious experiences at face value? Kitcher (1995) explored this question in the analogous context of scientists who have perceptions as a result of their scientific training. For example, a primatologist might see dominance relationships, whereas a novice only perceives a jumble of monkeys. If a primatologist says: “The subdominant male is showing submissive behavior toward the alpha male in order to avoid conflict,” it is impossible to check the experience without also having had the relevant training. How can we trust her in the absence of such training, or justify the perceptions in a non-circular way (after all, the training is what enables her to see these dominance relationships in the first place). For Alston (1991) this is not an issue, as most basic doxastic practices cannot be justified in a non-circular way. Kitcher (1995), however, thinks that scientists – and, by extension, other skilled practitioners – can justify their testimony by “engaging in displays of discriminatory virtuosity,” such as predicting how the alpha male will react to the behavior of the subdominant. This sets the bar quite high and it is unclear whether religious practitioners would be able to meet it, as the predictive value of religious experiences seems limited.

Even if it turns out that religious experience and ordinary sense perception are not closely analogous, religious experience could still be used as evidence against global atheism. Tucker (2011, p. 55) uses phenomenal conservatism to defend the view that religious experience can lead to justified religious belief. He cashes out phenomenal conservatism in evidential terms:

Phenomenal Conservatism if it seems to S that p, then S thereby has evidence which supports p.

Building on an evil-demon case, Tucker (2011) argues that even if one’s experience is not caused in an appropriate way (e.g., a religious experience that was drug-induced), it still provides some *prima facie* justification. In this scenario, an evil-demon causes your exact duplicate to have the same seemings as you have (e.g., it seems to her, sitting on a couch, reading this book), except that this person has none of the experiences you do (because there is no couch, no book, just an evil-demon instilling the belief). Both you and your duplicate have the exact same experiences, and the intuition seems to be that you both have the same amount of non-inferential justification, even though your duplicate does not know they are sitting in a couch, and you do.

What about people who have not had religious experiences themselves? As phenomenal conservatism is focused on phenomenal evidence, it would seem that people who haven’t had religious experiences do not have access to a potential body of evidence against global atheism. Moreover, phenomenal conservatism is controversial in epistemology, to say the least. However, testimony by others can also provide evidence. Dumsday (2016) argues that the ubiquity of reports about religious experiences poses a challenge to what he terms “settled metaphysical naturalism” – a strong conviction that metaphysical naturalism is true. According to Dumsday, the only reasonable explanation that a naturalist could offer about these reports is that people who claim to have

had religious experiences are deliberately deceptive. But given the absence of evidence that deception has been committed, this would be uncharitable, and therefore, morally wrong. The proper response of an atheist to widespread claims of religious experience, would be to shift to a tentative naturalism, away from a settled metaphysical naturalism.

The atheist could object to the argument from religious experience by pointing out incompatibilities between religious experiences. A Shintō worshipper might feel the presence of *kami*; a Roman Catholic might perceive the Virgin Mary, a Hindu might see Krishna. They might also argue that religious experiences are not cross-checkable (e.g. Fales 1996). The atheist could appeal to something like the following principle:

Skeptical Rule (SR) When experiences or claims conflict with one another, we should reject all of them.

As Kwan (2006) argues, SR is highly implausible: if a number of witnesses disagree about a given event, such as a hold-up, it would be strange to reject all their reports because they conflict and refuse to believe that a crime has taken place. Perhaps a better strategy would be to seek a common core of their experiences. Many real-life situations have inconsistent explanations and accounts; for example, historians have come up with many mutually incompatible reasons for the decline of the Roman empire, but we would not therefore conclude that the Roman empire did not decline, or that there was no Roman empire in the first place. Gellman (1997) has argued that contradictory experiences of God point to an inexhaustible plenitude on God's part. "God Himself is experienced both as a personal being and as an impersonal being" (Gellman 1997, p. 119). Nevertheless, the evidential value would have been stronger if people from distinct religious traditions were to converge on a highly specific God concept. Suppose that everyone who had religious experiences were to form full-fledged trinitarian Christian beliefs, this would seem very strong confirming evidence for the truth of Christian theism. Religious experiences seem to conform, to an important extent, to pre-existing religious concepts, hence Roman Catholics might experience saints interceding on their behalf, whereas Calvinists typically do not. Unfortunately, the cognitive science of religion has not paid much attention to religious experiences, and the neuroscientific work on religious experience does not shed much light on this question (see Schjoedt 2009 for a review).

The religious studies literature on religious experiences might be helpful to get clearer on their evidential value. The main existing positions on religious experiences are cultural constructivism (where religious experiences are to a very large extent or even entirely shaped by cultural expectations) and perennialism (which underlines the importance of a core experience, which is cross-culturally stable). Although both positions are compatible with a positive evidential status for religious experience, the perennialist position seems more congenial to arguments from religious experience: across human cultures, people have religious experiences that reflect a common core, which would speak against global atheism. This common core includes features such as a loss of experience of self, blissful feelings, a sense of the holy, a sense of unity (feeling the world as one), and noetic quality (a sense of insight or understanding of the world; see, e.g., Chen et al. 2011).

Taves and Asprem (2017) have recently proposed a building block approach that steers a middle way between perennialism and cultural constructivism. They argue that religious experiences are events – dreams, visions, voices, appearances, and the like. Such events, together with other basic building blocks including ritual actions and representations, form more complex cultural concepts, such as religious beliefs. As with other events, these events are not entirely shaped by culture. Rather, they are embedded within larger cultural frameworks. For example, a Shintō priest will interpret a sense of love and care as the presence of protective *kami*, whereas an Anglican vicar would interpret the same experience as Jesus's love. Religious experiences are interpreted in a culture-specific way, but they are not entirely shaped by the cultural context in which they take place. If this model of religious experience is correct, we are still left with religious experiences that occur across cultures and that are interpreted by religious believers as evidence for supernatural beings that fit within their local theism. Thus, the current cognitive literature provides *prima facie* evidence against global atheism.

Conclusions

Contemporary philosophers of religion, especially in the analytic tradition, tend to consider (Christian) theism or Anselmian theism as the default theist position, and naturalism as the default atheist position. As Schellenberg (2015, p. 14) writes “most naturalists ... assume that theistic God-centered religion must succeed if any does. Naturalism or theism. These seem to be the only options that many see.” Thus, atheist arguments have tended to focus on these forms of theism. However, there are other forms of theism that are philosophically coherent and that are not ruled out by atheist arguments. One way to assess whether any form of theism is plausible is to look at evidential objections against global atheism. If these objections succeed, then global atheism is less justified. As I have argued here, the argument from common consent and the argument from religious experience provide some evidence against global atheism. If these arguments are cogent, philosophers of religion would have to take seriously the possibility of theism. This is the case, even if arguments against local theisms (such as evidential arguments from evil or the argument from divine hiddenness) are successful.

Acknowledgment

Many thanks to Clayton Littlejohn, Ted Parent, Yvonne Aburrow, Ayon Maharaj, Aaron Rizzieri, James Harrod, Luis Rosa, Brendan Shea, Max Moore, Kelly Clark, Roxanne Kreimer, Liam Kofi Bright, Johan De Smedt, and Vernon Jenkins for commentaries to an earlier draft.

Notes

- 1 In the Jamesian framework, atheism and agnosticism are practically similar.

- 2 Note that higher-order evidence has a few unusual features, the most salient for this discussion is that it is relative to the thinker. As Christensen (2010) notes, suppose two people, Alice and Ben, are thinking about whether *p* is true. Alice thinks all things considered that *p*, Ben is still making up his mind. At this point, Alice's belief that *p* is higher-order evidence for *p* for Ben, but not for Alice (it would seem strange indeed if Alice could take her own belief that *p* as extra evidence for *p*'s truth).
- 3 Note that contemporary Reformed epistemologists such as Alvin Plantinga do not commonly regard the *sensus divinitatis* as evidence against atheism. Rather, they think that this properly functioning sense instills knowledge of God, in the absence of propositional evidence and argument.

References

- Alston, W. (1991) *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Brueckner, A. (2005) "Knowledge, evidence, and scepticism according to Williamson." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 70: 436–443.
- Calvin, J. (1960) *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans.F. Battles. Philadelphia: Westminster Press. Original work published 1559.
- Chen, Z., Qi, W., Hood, R. W., and Watson, P. J. (2011) "Common core thesis and qualitative and quantitative analysis of mysticism in Chinese Buddhist monks and nuns." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 50: 654–670.
- Christensen, D. (2007) "Epistemology of disagreement: The good news." *Philosophical Review* 116: 187–217.
- Christensen, D. (2009) "Disagreement as evidence: The epistemology of controversy." *Philosophy Compass* 4: 756–767.
- Christensen, D. (2010) "Higher-order evidence." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 81: 185–215.
- Cicero, M. (1967) "The Nature of the Gods," trans. H. Rackham, in *Cicero in Twenty-eight Volumes*, Vol. 19. London: Heinemann, pp. 2–383.
- Clark, K., and Barrett, J. (2010) "Reformed epistemology and the cognitive science of religion." *Faith and Philosophy* 27: 174–189.
- De Cruz, H. (2016) "The naturalness of religious belief: Epistemological implications," in K. Clark (ed.) *The Blackwell Companion to Naturalism*. Malden: Blackwell, pp. 481–493.
- De Cruz, H., and De Smedt, J. (2015) *A Natural History of Natural Theology: The Cognitive Science of Theology and Philosophy of Religion*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Diller, J. (2016) "Global and local atheisms," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 79: 7–18.
- Dougherty, T., and Tweedt, C. (2015) "Religious epistemology." *Philosophy Compass* 10: 547–559.
- Dummsday, T. (2016) "Anti-theism and the problem of divine hiddenness." *Sophia* 55: 179–195.
- Easwaran, K., Fenton-Glynn, L., Hitchcock, C., and Velasco, J. (2016) "Updating on the credences of others: Disagreement, agreement, and synergy." *Philosophers' Imprint* 16: 1–39.
- Ecklund, E., and Scheitle, C. (2007) "Religion among academic scientists: Distinctions, disciplines, and demographics." *Social Problems* 54: 289–307.
- Fales, E. (1996) "Scientific explanations of mystical experiences." *Religious Studies* 32: 297–313.
- Feldman, R. (2007) "Reasonable religious disagreements," in L. Anthony (ed.) *Philosophers Without Gods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 194–214.

- Foley, R. (2001) *Intellectual Trust in Oneself and Others*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fricker, M. (2014) "Epistemic trust in oneself and others – an argument from analogy?" in L. Callahan and T. O'Connor (eds.) *Religious Faith and Intellectual Virtue*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 174–203.
- Garvey, B. (2010) "Absence of evidence, evidence of absence, and the atheist's teapot." *Ars Disputandi* 10: 9–22.
- Gellman, J. (1992) "A new look at the problem of evil." *Faith and Philosophy* 9: 210–216.
- Gellman, J. (1997) *Experience of God and the Rationality of Religious Belief*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Gross, N., and Simmons, S. (2009) "The religiosity of American college and university professors." *Sociology of Religion* 70: 101–129.
- Huemer, M. (2001) *Skepticism and the Veil of Perception*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- James, W. (1896) "The will to believe." *The New World: A Quarterly Review of Religion, Ethics and Theology* 5: 327–347.
- James, W. (1985) *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, ed. M. Marty. London: Penguin. Original work published 1902.
- Kelly, T. (2011) "Consensus Gentium: Reflections on the 'Common Consent' argument for the existence of God," in K. Clark and R. VanArragon (eds.) *Evidence and Religious Belief*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 135–156.
- Kitcher, P. (1995) *The Advancement of Science: Science without Legend, Objectivity without Illusions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kwan, K. (2006) "Can religious experience provide justification for the belief in God? The debate in contemporary analytic philosophy." *Philosophy Compass* 1: 640–661.
- Lackey, J. (2010) "What should we do when we disagree," in T. Gendler and J. Hawthorne (eds.) *Oxford Studies in Epistemology*, Vol. 3. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 274–93.
- Luhmann, T. (2012) *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*. New York: Vintage.
- McGrew, T., and McGrew, L. (2009) "The argument from miracles: A cumulative case for the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth," in W. L. Craig and J. P. Moreland (eds.) *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 593–662.
- Nagasawa, Y. (2011) "Anselmian theism." *Philosophy Compass* 6: 564–571.
- Overall, C. (1985) "Miracles as evidence against the existence of God." *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 23: 347–353.
- Pew Forum (2009) "Mystical experiences." Available at <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2009/12/29/mystical-experiences/> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Pew Forum (2014) "Americans' faith in God may be eroding." Available at <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/04/americans-faith-in-god-may-be-eroding/> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Plantinga, A. (2000) *Warranted Christian Belief*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pryor, J. (2000) "The sceptic and the dogmatist." *Noûs* 34: 517–549.
- Rea, M. (2015) "Hiddenness and Transcendence," in A. Green and E. Stump (eds.) *Hidden Divinity and Religious Belief: New Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 210–225.
- Reid, J. (2015) "The Common Consent argument from Herbert to Hume." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 53: 401–433.
- Rollins, J. (2015) "Beliefs and testimony as social evidence: Epistemic egoism, epistemic universalism, and common consent arguments." *Philosophy Compass* 10: 78–90.
- Rowe, W. (1979) "The problem of evil and some varieties of atheism." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16: 335–341.
- Russell, B. (1969) *Dear Bertrand Russell: A Selection of His Correspondence with the General Public 1950–1968*, ed. B. Feinberg and R. Kasrils. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

- Schellenberg, J. (2006) *Divine Hiddenness and Human Reason*, 2nd edn. Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Schellenberg, J. (2007) *The Wisdom to Doubt: A Justification of Religious Skepticism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Schellenberg, J. (2015) "Divine hiddenness and human philosophy," in A. Green and E. Stump (eds.) *Hidden Divinity and Religious Belief: New Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 13–32.
- Schjoedt, U. (2009) "The religious brain: A general introduction to the experimental neuroscience of religion." *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 21: 310–339.
- Steinhart, E. (2012) "On the number of gods," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 72: 75–83.
- Subramuniyaswami, S. (2000) *Loving Ganeśa: Hinduism's Endearing Elephant-Faced God*. Kapaa: Himalayan Academy.
- Swinburne, R. (1974) "Duty and the will of God." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 4: 213–227.
- Swinburne, R. (2004) *The Existence of God*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Taves, A., and Asprem, E. (2017) "Experience as event: Event cognition and the study of (religious) experiences." *Religion, Brain and Behaviour* 7: 43–62.
- Tucker, C. (2011) "Phenomenal conservatism and evidentialism in religious epistemology," in K. Clark and R. VanArragon (eds.) *Evidence and Religious Belief*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 52–73.
- Van Elk, M., Rutjens, B., van der Pligt, J., and van Harreveld, F. (2016) "Priming of supernatural agent concepts and agency detection." *Religion, Brain and Behaviour* 6: 4–33.
- Wilkins, J. S., and Griffiths, P. E. (2013) "Evolutionary debunking arguments in three domains: Fact, value and religion," in G. Dawes and J. Maclaurin (eds.) *A New Science of Religion*. New York: Routledge, pp. 133–146.
- Williamson, T. (2000). *Knowledge and its Limits*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zagzebski, L. (2010) "Religious knowledge," in S. Bernecker and D. Pritchard (eds.) *Routledge Companion to Epistemology*. London: Routledge, Chapter 36.
- Zagzebski, L. (2011) "Epistemic self-trust and the Consensus Gentium argument," in K. Clark and R. Van Arragon (eds.) *Evidence and Religious Belief*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 22–36.
- Zuckerman, P. (2007) "Atheism: Contemporary numbers and patterns," in M. Martin (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 47–65.

Normative Objections to Atheism

C. STEPHEN EVANS

What might a normative objection to atheism be? There are a number of possibilities. One kind of normative objection to atheism would consist of arguments against atheism that take normativity in general or some particular kind of normativity or even particular normative facts as their starting point. Such arguments would try to show that atheism cannot adequately explain this starting point, or at least show that atheism seems less probable on the basis of these features. In many cases such argument would be combined with arguments that the features in question can be explained if theism is true. What are commonly called moral arguments for theism would be arguments of this kind. (In general any positive argument for theism can also be construed as an objection to atheism, although there could be objections to atheism that are not arguments for theism.)

A second possible thing one might mean by a normative objection to atheism would be an argument that atheism is itself practically bad in some way. Perhaps atheism is bad for the atheist, or perhaps atheism produces bad consequences for others. A good example, which will be discussed later, might be Immanuel Kant's well-known argument that atheism leads to a kind of moral despair, which is incompatible with the moral faith needed to live as one ought. Another example could be the common claim that atheism undermines moral character in some way, and thus that atheists are more likely to be morally inferior in some respect. Interestingly, there is quite a bit of empirical support for something in the neighborhood of this claim. A good deal of research shows that serious religious believers, who regularly attend a church, synagogue, or mosque, are significantly more likely to help others in a variety of ways. Religious people on average give more to charity than non-religious people, and they also give more of their time to helping others. This is true not just of gifts made to religious institutions. Religious people are also more likely than non-believers to give to non-religious charities.¹ However, since these are obviously empirical claims and not deeply philosophical, I shall not give these findings any further consideration.

It is clearly not possible in a single article to give a comprehensive treatment of such arguments. What I shall attempt to do in this chapter is describe a number of arguments of both of these two kinds that I regard as among the more promising ones, analyzing both their strengths and possible weak points.

Some Preliminary Definitions and Assumptions

Before beginning my account of these arguments, I shall first set out some definitions and assumptions that will shape the essay. The first issue to be addressed is what is to count as "atheism." The etymology of the word suggests that an atheist is someone who is against or opposed to God. The ordinary meaning, of course, is not that an atheist acknowledges God but is "opposed" to God in some way. Rather, an atheist is someone who rejects the claim that there is a God. But what is here meant by "God"? Should we take "God" to refer to the God of traditional theism, a being who is uncreated and the creator of every concrete being other than himself? God in this sense is usually regarded as a being who has such properties as omnipotence, omniscience, and moral perfection. It is obvious that someone might claim that no being of this sort exists, and yet still believe that there is a God or gods, that is, beings who transcend the natural order by virtue of the possession of supernatural powers. It would seem odd to describe someone who believed in such a God or gods as an atheist. For example, a process theist who denies that God is omnipotent and/or morally perfect would not seem to be an atheist. However, it also seems odd to say that someone who is an atheist could not believe in such things as spirits or ghosts. At what point might a powerful spirit be thought of as a god? Perhaps not many atheists believe in such things as the local spirit who inhabits a pond near my house, but it does not seem logically incoherent.

So it would seem that the concept of "a god" is somewhat fuzzy, and this fuzziness means that the concept of an atheist is similarly fuzzy. I shall try to deal with this issue by using the God of theism as something like the "paradigm" of belief in God, while allowing that there are cases where believers in God do not think that God has all the attributes of traditional theism. A believer in God will then be defined as someone who believes in the God of traditional theism or who believes in a being (or beings) who is significantly like the God of traditional theism. (The vagueness of the second clause acknowledges the vagueness of the concept.) Henceforth in this chapter, when I speak of "belief in God" I shall refer to someone who has such a belief. On this view, a preliminary definition of an atheist might be that an atheist is someone who does *not* believe in the existence of the God of traditional theism or in the existence of any being who has a significant resemblance to the God of traditional theism.

However, this preliminary definition is not adequate, since it does not take account of the distinction commonly drawn between atheism and agnosticism. Most people describe agnostics as people who are unsure whether there is a God or not. Such people do not believe in God in any robust sense, but they might well wish for or hope for God's existence. Some of them might even consider themselves religious; there are theologians and philosophers who think that religious faith requires something less than

belief. Someone who is unsure of whether God exists, but who ardently hopes that God exists might well be part of a religious community, and engage in religious rituals. (Indeed, I have known people in churches who fit this description.) It seems odd to describe people of this sort as atheists, so I hold that the common distinction between atheism and agnosticism is worth preserving. To be an atheist, it does not seem sufficient merely to lack belief in God. Rather, an atheist is someone who has some kind of conviction that God does not exist. An atheist is someone who thinks that the claim that there is a God (understood in my somewhat expansive sense, so that it could include more than traditional theists) is false, just as a believer in God (in my somewhat expansive sense) is someone who thinks the claim is true. This leaves the category of agnostic for the person who does not know the truth (or at least believes he or she does not know) and has no strong belief either way.

How robust or strong must the belief of the atheist or theist be? Clearly, it would be too strict to say that the believer and the atheist never have any doubts or worries about their views. Many religious believers go through periods of serious doubt, and I would imagine the same might be true for atheists, though here I have no personal experience to draw on. Perhaps it would be reasonable to say that the believers on both sides have convictions strong enough to serve as a basis for consistent, serious life-choices over an extended period of time. Mother Teresa apparently struggled with severe doubts over much of her life, but retained a strong enough belief to continue to live as a Christian believer, dedicating her life to serve the poor and ill of Calcutta. It would surely be odd to describe her as an agnostic because of her doubts, and so I think a pragmatic or existential measure for strength of belief is appropriate.

The final preliminary issue I want to consider is what should count as an "objection" to atheism or a defense of belief in God. I have in mind philosophical objections, so this is really a question as to what one should expect of philosophical arguments in this area. What is to count as a good philosophical argument? Some philosophers on both sides of the theism-atheism debate have assumed that the goal should be some kind of proof. A proof would be a philosophical argument that led to a conclusion that no reasonable and competent thinker would reject. Such an argument must be deductively logically valid and have premises that are generally known to be true or at least are universally accepted. Others would use a somewhat lower standard. Perhaps there are no arguments for or against God that amount to proofs, but there might be probabilistic arguments acceptable to everyone that show that God's existence or non-existence is highly probable, or at least probable.

My own view is that it is unrealistic to expect philosophical arguments for or against atheism or theism to measure up to the above standards. The main reason for my view is inductive in nature; it does not appear there are any philosophical arguments for any substantive conclusions that meet these standards in other fields of philosophy (outside of formal logic). There are, for example, no arguments accepted by all reasonable people for or against causal determinism, scientific realism, or any position whatsoever in philosophy of mind. There are of course arguments (and positions) which are accepted by a majority of philosophers, but hardly any philosopher would say that this is strong evidence for the truth of those positions or of the strength of those arguments. So why should one expect arguments in philosophy of religion to meet a standard which

philosophical arguments in other fields never (or rarely if I have overestimated the lack of conclusiveness) meet?

If this is right, what value do philosophical arguments have? My view is that a philosophical argument's value lies primarily in helping someone get a clearer picture of what we might call the cost of holding a particular view. Confronted by a valid argument for a conclusion that seems wrong, a philosopher must look for a premise that is false or at least a premise that can reasonably be denied. The cost of refusing to accept the conclusion will be denying the premise or premises. In many cases the cost will be inconsequential to the philosopher, but this may not always be the case.

Let's consider an example that is only indirectly connected to the debate about God. Suppose, for example, philosopher A develops an argument from moral realism for the falsity of naturalism. If philosopher B is already convinced of the truth of moral expressivism or some other form of anti-realism about morality, then B will be happy to pay the cost. For philosopher C, however, who is convinced of the truth of moral realism, the cost might be high. If C wishes to affirm naturalism and so reject the conclusion of the argument, C will want to look for some other premise of the argument to attack, the denial of which will be less costly than the denial of moral realism. In the best case or worst case scenario (depending on one's point of view), a powerful argument is one that might actually require the acceptance of the conclusion of the argument, because that is less costly than denying any of the premises.

If I am right about this, then the success or failure, or the strength or weakness, of a philosophical argument will be person-relative. An argument may be powerful to some individuals and not powerful at all to others. Some people might actually change their view because of an argument while many others will not. However, the argument may have real value even for those who do not accept the conclusion, in producing a deeper philosophical understanding of the issues and the costs and benefits of holding one view rather than another.

Therefore, in looking for normative objections to atheism, I do not expect to find arguments that will be convincing to every reasonable person. Rather, I think an argument can be judged valuable if it appears convincing to some people and perhaps seems to have some force even to people who do not find it convincing. There will I think always be ways that a sophisticated atheist can avoid a conclusion that would require abandoning atheism. The strength of the argument can be measured by the degree of discomfort this "way out" may produce, at least in some.

Theoretical Moral Arguments for God's Existence

Moral arguments for God's existence can be usefully divided into arguments that are primarily theoretical in nature, and arguments that are primarily practical.² The former are arguments that take some aspect of morality as data to be explained by God, and thus have as their conclusion something like "(Probably) God exists." The latter argue that an agent who is pursuing some moral end is more likely to achieve that end by believing in God, or perhaps that such an agent cannot achieve that end without such belief. The conclusion is thus something like "(Probably) I ought to believe in God."

Arguments Rooted in a Divine Command Theory of Moral Obligation

One popular type of theoretical moral argument is rooted in a divine command theory of moral obligations (henceforth a DCT). There is a long tradition of thinking that moral obligations stem from moral laws, which are conceived as analogous to the laws of a human state. Legal laws of course presuppose some political institution, such as a legislature or monarchy, which possesses the authority to create the laws. The existence of legal obligations is explained by this institution's exercise of its authority. The divine command theorist holds that moral laws also require some kind of authoritative source, and that the only plausible candidate to fill this role is God.

If a divine command account of moral obligations is correct, then the dependence of moral obligations on God seems so direct as almost not to require argument. On some versions of a DCT, moral obligations simply are identical to God's laws, which could be defined as God's will for how humans should live insofar as God has communicated his will to humans. On such an account anyone who is aware of moral obligations is directly aware of what we might call God's address to them. However, what does seem to require argument would be the defense of the DCT itself. Why should a person believe that God is the source of moral obligations?

Many philosophers have thought that divine command theories of morality are undermined by the so-called "Euthyphro problem." Divine command theories say morality is dependent on God's commands, but the critic thinks that this threatens to make moral truths arbitrary. If we say that what is right is right because God commands it, then we cannot say that God commands what is right because it is right. So why does God command humans to behave as he does?

Recent versions of divine command theory have successfully confronted this objection by claiming that it is only moral *obligations* that are grounded in God's commands.³ If truths about the good are logically independent of divine commands, then the divine command theorist can say that God commands what he commands because of his love for and knowledge of the good. This limitation does imply that what God commands would be good even if he did not command it. (And likewise what God prohibits would be bad even if he did not prohibit it.) However, since the category of the good is wider than the category of the morally obligatory, God's commands can still be the ground of the latter. The situation is again analogous to that of a human legislator, who makes laws that are aimed at the good.

Such a limited version of a DCT admits that there are normative truths of a moral nature that hold independently of God's commands. This is obvious since one of the necessary elements of a DCT is an account of why the commands of God should be obeyed. For example, one possible answer to this question is to say that God is our benefactor, the giver of all the goods a person enjoys. If the recipient of a great good owes a debt to the giver, then we can understand why it is good to obey God and why we ought to obey God. This is obviously a normative principle that must hold independently of God's commands on a DCT.

This feature of contemporary DCTs might seem to make them vulnerable to another objection. If there are normative principles that hold independently of divine commands, why cannot moral obligations also hold independently of divine commands? Most philosophers would agree that there are normative logical and

epistemological principles that specify how people ought to reason, but few would think that such principles are grounded in an “authority” of some kind. Why not hold, as John Stuart Mill did, that moral principles can also be recognized as valid without the need of an external legislator (1874: 164–165).

The defender of a DCT may respond to this challenge by arguing that there are special features of moral obligations that cry out for explanation. Robert Adams (1999, p. 232) points out that someone who violates a moral obligation is subject to serious moral criticism. While violating a moral obligation is always bad, not every bad act is a violation of a moral obligation. If I make a logical mistake in attempting a formal proof, I have done something bad, but not necessarily morally bad. Someone might well criticize my logical acumen without in any way thinking that I am in some way blameworthy. Moral obligations are not merely normative principles, but have distinctive features. A moral obligation does not simply provide a reason for acting in a particular way, but a reason of a particular kind.

What features distinguish moral obligations? Any answers given will of course be controversial and subject to dispute, but many morally serious people would agree that moral obligations have the following features:

1. They provide overriding reasons for action, not just reasons. For instance, if I am morally obligated to act in a certain way, it does not matter that I do not want to perform the action, or that the action might cost me money, or that it might make me unpopular.
2. To say that an act is morally obligatory is (at least often) something like pronouncing a legal verdict (guilty/not-guilty). There is a binary character to moral obligations.
3. This second feature goes hand in hand with a third: a recognition of a moral obligation often helps bring deliberation to closure. If tempted to cheat on my income tax, and I recognize such an act as morally forbidden, I do not have to calculate the chances of my getting caught by the government revenue service. I know I should not perform the act without any further deliberation.
4. Moral obligations are motivating, not in the sense that people always do what they recognize to be obligatory, but in the sense that the recognition of an obligation creates a kind of pull towards acting in a certain way. (At least this is true for people who have some kind of functioning conscience and are not sociopaths.)
5. Moral obligations, unlike legal obligations or the obligations I may have by virtue of particular social roles I occupy or institutions in which I participate, hold for humans as humans. My moral obligations thus cannot be explained by the fact that I live in a particular country or belong to some club. Moral obligations hold universally for humans.
6. Some of our moral obligations are universal in the scope of their application. My obligation not to kill an innocent person does not just extend to friends and family, fellow-citizens, or those who share my political or religious views. If I intentionally kill an innocent stranger in another part of the world, I have done something morally wrong.
7. Those who violate moral obligations are blameworthy; we feel that they are deserving of some kind of sanction, even if it is only disapproval of a particular kind.

A DCT provides a plausible explanation of all these features. If we assume that a relation to God is the most important relation a human being can have, since a person's eternal happiness is linked to this relation, then it not hard to see why moral obligations provide overriding reasons for actions. For example, suppose an unjust state passes a law requiring me to do what is morally prohibited. The threat of legal punishment provides a reason for doing what is immoral in that case, but a strong case can be made that violating God's law would be worse. Both Socrates and the New Testament agree that it is more important to obey God than human beings (see Plato's *Apology*, 29d, and Acts 4:19).

Since there is a fact of the matter about whether God has issued a command, just as there is a fact of the matter about whether a human law has been issued, we can also understand the binary character of moral obligations. We can also see how moral obligations can help bring deliberation to closure. In fact, one reason God may give moral commands and create moral duties is to put certain kinds of actions "off the table," so to speak. Such actions do not need to be considered. The motivating power of moral obligations can also be explained. First, it makes sense that in creating human beings (whether by evolution or in some other way) God should ensure that their motivational structure includes a kind of pull towards the moral law. Second, insofar as humans realize that the moral law is God's law, and is connected to their relation to God, they have powerful reasons to follow moral obligations.

We can also easily explain why all human beings are subject to moral obligations. If all humans are made in God's image and are indebted to God for all they are and have, it makes sense that all of them are subject to God's authority. The universal scope of some of moral obligations can also be explained. If all human persons are made in God's image, and have a kind of unique value or dignity because of that, it is understandable why God would command humans to love all other humans. This is precisely how many theologians understand the biblical command to love one's neighbor as oneself. The "neighbor" must be understood inclusively, not simply as those who are connected to an agent in some way.⁴ We can also understand why moral wrongdoing is linked to blameworthiness. A morally wrong act brings with it objective guilt since a real law has been violated.

There are of course responses that an atheist can make at this point. Some may deny the objective reality of moral obligations, or perhaps deny that such obligations have all the features I have discussed. And of course it is possible that even if such obligations are real, there might be non-theistic explanations that are equally good. It is one thing to show that God provides a satisfying explanation of the features of moral obligations; quite another to show that there are no other equally satisfying explanations. Since there are a large number of possibilities, one article cannot even begin to accomplish the task of surveying them and showing their inadequacy. Nevertheless, I think this argument provides a serious challenge for atheists who are moral realists, and it is not hard to show that some of the standard non-theistic explanations of moral obligations fail to account for one of more of the features discussed.⁵

Interestingly, it is not necessary to root this kind of moral argument in a full-fledged DCT. Suppose that God's commands are sufficient to establish a moral obligation but not necessary. In that case a DCT will be false. However, there might still be plenty of particular moral obligations that humans are aware of that hold because of God, and these particular obligations might be all that is needed to ground a moral argument (see Evans 2013).

Arguments from Moral Knowledge

Many other moral arguments of a theoretical nature have been developed. However, due to space limitations, I shall discuss only two. Even for these two, I can only provide a sketch of the arguments rather than fully developed versions. The first I shall consider is an argument from moral knowledge.

One alternative to a divine command account of moral obligations is to view at least the fundamental principles of moral obligation as timeless, metaphysically necessary truths. On such a view, such propositions as “it is wrong intentionally to kill an innocent person” are broadly logically necessary, having the same status as mathematical truths and logically necessary principles. Since it seems plausible that such an account means moral obligations do not require a divine lawgiver as their basis, they may seem attractive to atheists, or at least to those who are open to Platonic views of necessary truths.

However, such accounts may undercut atheism in another way, since it is mysterious how humans have the capacity to know such timeless truths.⁶ Sharon Street (2006) has presented a well-known and much-discussed argument against realist moral theories by arguing that we have no reason to believe that Darwinian evolution would have shaped our evaluative attitudes in ways that make them correspond to moral truths. If we assume that “moral truths” are just projections of subjective attitudes, then a scientific explanation can be given as to why we make the moral judgments we do, since those attitudes have causal powers and may have survival value. However, if moral truths are “stance-independent,” then it seems that it would be “an accident or miracle” that our evaluative judgments track these truths. If moral truths are timeless, necessary truths they do not seem to have causal power, and so cannot themselves explain why we believe them. Street is not alone in thinking that evolutionary accounts of human development lead to moral skepticism. Similar arguments can be found in a number of thinkers (for example, Kahane 2011 and Joyce 2016).

As one might expect, there have been a number of attempts to respond to such evolutionary debunking arguments. Most have conceded that moral truths do not play a causal role in bringing out human moral beliefs. Instead they argue that our grasp of moral truths is not accidental because of a connection between those beliefs and some “third factor” that correlates with moral truth. For David Enoch, that third factor is survival, which is certainly one of the properties that provides an evolutionary advantage, and which Enoch argues is also an objective good (2011, esp. p. 163–177). Enoch himself admits that this problem is the most serious one that his view faces, and he is not entirely confident that his response is adequate. Part of the problem is that it still seems that our moral knowledge involves a bit of luck, since it looks accidental that one of the ends that evolution tracks, survival, also possesses the property of being objectively valuable.

Erik Wielenberg (2014, pp. 135–177) has also offered a response to evolutionary debunking arguments. On his view the third factor is constituted by the cognitive faculties humans possess. On this account, it is the possession of those faculties that make it true that humans possess rights not to be harmed in various ways, but the possession of those faculties also plays a causal role in bringing it about that humans have those rights. I shall discuss the adequacy of the claim that it is the possession of these cognitive

faculties that give humans moral rights in the next section. However, it seems to many that if we roll back the “evolutionary tape” and replay the process, things could have gone quite differently, and we can imagine possible worlds in which human creatures lack our current moral beliefs. It is still inexplicable that the natural properties by virtue of which we have certain moral properties should also cause us to have true beliefs that we have those moral properties.

Wielenberg argues in response that those worlds in which humans do not have moral beliefs like the ones we have are really not very much like the actual world, and that in any world in which we have the cognitive faculties we have we would have something like the moral beliefs we have. However, this is far from obvious. It is not hard to imagine a world in which humans have wildly false moral beliefs or simply have no beliefs at all that would be recognizable as moral. Wielenberg himself admits (2014, pp. 167–168) that his claim that our moral knowledge is non-accidental probably requires the view that the laws of nature are metaphysically necessary.

At the very least it is worth noting that many non-theists are skeptical about views such as Wielenberg’s. Simon Blackburn (2007), for example, scathingly criticizes the “sentimentalist” view of David Wiggins (1991), who holds that objective moral properties are grasped by way of our subjective responses to those properties, in a fashion that would surely apply to Wielenberg as well. Blackburn recognizes that there is a correlation between our emotional responses and what we call “moral properties.” However, he thinks that correlation must be explained by seeing those properties as reflections of those responses. The idea that our “sensibilities” are somehow attuned to recognize objective moral properties is implausible (2007, p.51): “But it is the other half, that the sensibilities are ‘made for’ the properties, that really startles. Who or what makes them like that? (God? As we have seen, no natural story explains how the ethical sensibilities of human beings were made for the ethical properties of things, so perhaps it is a supernatural story.)

As Blackburn’s comment suggests, it is not the fact that moral faculties are produced by an evolutionary process that creates the problem for moral realism, but the fact that the evolutionary process is thought to be unguided. If God exists, and if God used an evolutionary process to bring humans into existence, intending humans to be moral beings, it is not accidental that an evolutionary process has produced human persons with cognitive faculties that allow us to track moral truths.⁷

Arguments from Human Dignity

The final theoretical moral argument I will sketch is one that takes as its starting point the claim that human beings have a special kind of intrinsic worth. This kind of worth is termed “dignity” by Kant, who makes it the basis of one of his versions of the “categorical imperative,” affirming that one must treat all human persons as “ends in themselves,” never solely as means. I shall in this section use the term ‘dignity’ to refer to this kind of special worth or value that humans are thought to possess. Some contemporary Kantians who adopt “Constructivism” see dignity as something that we ascribe to humans, rather than as an objective property that we recognize (see, for example, Korsgaard 1996: esp. pp. 92–125). However, many would argue that it is

implausible to see such a property as “dignity” as floating free from the metaphysical facts about humans. Surely, if we humans have such a property, it is a fact about us that we recognize. If we fail to see humans as having this property, we are making a mistake in how we view the world.

The interesting question at this point is how this special property is to be explained. Most non-theists who accept that humans have dignity argue that our dignity is grounded in some capacities or other properties that humans have, but it is not easy to see what properties can do the trick. The problem is that those who affirm humans have dignity want to affirm that this is a property possessed by *all* humans and one that is possessed *equally*. Let us consider the idea, first suggested by Kant himself, that human beings have dignity because they possess rationality. As an explanation of dignity, this gives rise to two problems. First, not all humans are capable of reasoning. Human infants and those with advanced dementia and other brain dysfunction certainly do not have the capacity to reason, and yet many moral theorists want to hold that infants and those with dementia still should not be used simply as means but always as “ends in themselves” as well. Second, even those humans who can reason differ dramatically in their ability to reason, and it is hard to see why a value that something has by virtue of being able to reason could be possessed equally.

Nicholas Wolterstorff (2008) has argued that the view that humans have a special kind of value that gives them rights was historically produced by Jewish and Christian conceptions of human beings.⁸ Wolterstorff argues that even today there is no adequate secular account of how humans could come to possess such a value, and the only plausible story is the traditional Jewish-Christian claim that humans – all humans – are made in the image of God, a quality that does not have to be identified with some particular property humans possess.⁹ If God exists, God is himself supremely good, and it makes sense to say that creatures made by God to resemble God would have a special value as well. If all humans are made in the image of God, and all of them are loved equally by God in consequence of this, then it makes sense that all humans have dignity, and that this dignity does not come in degrees.

One might think that such a religious account of human dignity would be subject to the same problems as secular accounts. This would be the case if one simply identifies the image of God with some empirical property or set of properties humans possess, such as rationality. For it is hard to find such a property possessed by all humans equally. However, if the image of God is understood as the capacity to know God and be loved by God, it does look as if this is something all humans could possess, and possess equally.¹⁰

Practical Moral Arguments for Belief in God

I shall now turn to the consideration of practical moral arguments for belief in God. The most famous such argument is undoubtedly Kant’s. The argument can be interpreted differently, but I believe it is best put in something like the following way. Kant argues that a person who follows morality is committed to the achievement of “the highest good,” which Kant argues would be a world in which people are morally virtuous and happy, with their happiness contingent upon their virtue. If I am obligated to seek this end, then Kant holds I must believe the end is attainable, since it would be irrational to

aim at an end that could not possibly be achieved. However, if the world is a mechanistic system in which the causal laws that bring about effects have no connection to morality, we will have little reason to hope the highest good is attainable through moral effort. Empirically, it does not seem reasonable to believe that people will become completely morally good, and it certainly does not seem to be the case that those who do make moral progress are happier than those who do not. Recognizing these facts can result in a kind of moral despair, and such despair can tempt a person to think that morality is pointless, or, in Kant's own words, "a mere phantom of the brain." (GMS IV: 445, Kant 1964, p. 113). Kant holds that it is only if we believe that the natural world in which we act is ruled by a moral providence that we can avoid this despair and continue to live morally.

I think it must be admitted that Kant's moral argument as originally formulated is less than convincing to most philosophers. Many will deny that morality requires us to seek to actualize the highest good as Kant understands it. Even if what Kant describes is a reasonable ideal, it seems all one can reasonably be required to do is work towards the realization of whatever approximation to the ideal is actually possible. Kant himself admits that the argument does not actually require belief in God, but only the belief that God's existence is *possible*. The minimum that morality demands is a belief in the possibility that the highest good can be achieved, but this in turn only seems to require the possibility of God's existence. (Though interpreted in this way, the argument could still be valuable as ruling out a certain kind of dogmatic atheism.)

However, Kant himself does not claim his version of the argument is the only one possible. He says that his proof "is not any sense a newly discovered argument," but rather "its germ was lying in the mind of man when his reason first quickened into life" (KU: 458, Kant 1952, p. 125). Hence it is plausible that Kant himself thinks that there are different versions of the argument, and indeed, he seems to state the argument rather differently at different times. In one version the argument can be interpreted as resting on the claim that we necessarily will happiness (both of ourselves and for others), and so there is something volitionally unstable about a commitment to morality that takes no account of happiness. Something like this insight underlies Sidgwick's famous (1962) discussion of the "dualism of the practical reason," which requires humans both to seek happiness and to be willing to renounce it.¹¹ This argument does not necessitate belief in God, but it does help us see why objective morality in a godless universe may appear odd, as indeed it did to atheists such as J. L. Mackie (1977), who appealed to this oddness or "queerness" to argue against moral realism.

The mention of "oddness" suggests that there is a theoretical element to such arguments; they are not purely practical or pragmatic. However, there is still a practical dimension that is connected to their appeal. It is difficult to believe that morality is essential to human life if one sees no reason to think that morality and happiness are connected. However, it is hard to follow morality if it is not seen as an essential part of human existence. As John Hare puts it (1966, p. 88), "If we are to endorse wholeheartedly the long-term shape of our lives, we have to see this shape as consistent with our happiness."

The heart of practical arguments such as Kant's lies in the conviction that if morality is to have a deep claim on us, it must somehow itself be a deep feature of the universe we live in.¹² As Kant himself puts it, if the world is godless, then there would be an

“open contradiction” between “a final end within, that is set before them [humans] as a duty, and a nature without, that has no final end, though in it the former end is to be actualized” (*KU*: 458, Kant 1952, p. 129). Without belief in God, those committed to morality face a fundamental incongruity. They are unconditionally obligated to work for ends in a world which is indifferent to those ends, and in which the laws that control causal outcomes take no account of morality.

The atheist might respond to this by claiming that it just might be the case that the world is indeed odd. Perhaps this is the kind of view expressed by Camus who claims that the world is “absurd” (1955: esp. pp. 3–48). To embrace the absurd in this way, according to Camus, is to reject any fundamental attitude of hope. Camus says that there is a kind of incongruity between an irrational world and “the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart” (1955, p.16). I see no way to prove that Camus is mistaken about this. The world might indeed be absurd. However, it does seem that the “wild longing for clarity” Camus speaks about, and the hope that a meaningful, moral life requires, could be viewed as both theoretical evidence against atheism, as well as providing a pragmatic reason to avoid atheism if one can.

The atheist might respond that pragmatic criteria should play no role in our beliefs. In the spirit of W. K. Clifford (1877), it might be urged that evidence, and evidence alone, should be the basis of beliefs, and that it is immoral to allow our beliefs to be affected by our goals or hopes. However, even if there is such a duty to shape our beliefs by evidence, we must ask how weighty this duty is, and how it compares with other duties. If a belief tends to undermine our confidence in the validity of duty in general, then it is unclear whether this duty can still command our allegiance. It might be a case where following one’s duty undermines faith that there are any duties.

Should We Want God to Exist?

Even if one is an epistemic purist and holds that beliefs about God (or atheism) should be based solely on evidence, our normative goals will still make a substantial difference. Decisions still have to be made about whether to look for evidence for a belief, and how to weigh the evidence we have. There is no doubt that even in science how much time and attention is devoted to looking for evidence is greatly shaped by the practical importance of the issue, and there is every reason to think the same will be true in philosophy of religion. If someone thinks, for example, that the meaningfulness of human life depends on God’s existence, then this would seem to justify a great deal of time and effort in seeking to find the truth.

Recently, a number of articles have addressed the issue of whether one should desire God to exist or desire God not to exist.¹³ How a person answers this question will surely be shaped by the person’s own desires, as well as by the person’s own view of what God (if God exists) is like. Suppose one believes, as I do, that God is completely good and loving, that God will ensure the ultimate triumph of good over evil, that God desires the ultimate good of every person, and that this good includes ultimate and eternal bliss for everyone who does not intentionally reject that good. I find it difficult even to understand how anyone could not desire that such a God exist. Someone who shares my view

about this will surely at least hope that God exists, even if the person does not believe God exists, and will likely find agnosticism preferable to atheism.

It is worth asking what kind of evidence one should expect to find for God's reality if God does exist, though this is a topic too big adequately to treat at the end of this chapter.¹⁴ Much of the debate about the existence of God in modern Western philosophy has focused simply on the question of what evidence we have, and not on what characteristics humans would need properly to understand and appreciate the evidence.¹⁵ However, it is very plausible that a God who values human freedom would only desire humans to serve him who love him and freely want to be part of God's kingdom. Kant and Kierkegaard both agree that a knowledge of God that is rooted in "objective," theoretical inquiry would have no value. It seems appropriate that God would make the process whereby one comes to know him a process that requires spiritual and moral development. If that is so, then it is not surprising that the knowledge of God would partly depend on what Kierkegaard (1985) called the passions, for it is the passions that give shape and substance to human existence. It is also not surprising that genuine faith in God (one of the passions, according to Kierkegaard) is not only compatible with some "objective uncertainty" but even requires such uncertainty, since "without risk there is no faith." It is vital to understand that the "subjectivity" that Kierkegaard speaks about as the key to religious knowledge is not a substitute for evidence. It is a way of pointing to the characteristics a human person must have to see the evidence for God. There may be "normative objections to atheism" that can only be grasped by a person who has the right passions; such a person love and hopes for the right things.

One of the ways we show our love and devotion to a cause is by what we are willing to sacrifice for the cause when its victory is not certain. Such behavior is not merely an expression of love and devotion. It is also a way of forming and strengthening such passions. Social psychologists tell us that people who behave *as if* a certain view is true are more likely to come to believe that view is true. This means that those who want to believe in God, and decide to live as one would if God existed, may be seen as people who are on the road to actual belief. Commitment itself can be a kind of normative objection to atheism.

Notes

- 1 For a good summary of the evidence for these claims that has accumulated over decades in many different countries, see Myers (2018). Interestingly, besides these "pro-social" traits religious people are also on average significantly happier and healthier. These findings hold for individuals and not nations or states. Paradoxically, countries or American states that are more religious score more poorly on some measures of well-being than places that are more secular.
- 2 For a fuller account of this distinction see Evans (2016).
- 3 Adams (1999) makes this move. For elaborated versions of similar views, see Evans (2013) and Hare (2015).
- 4 This is how the parable of the "Good Samaritan" is commonly understood. (See Luke 10: 25–37.)
- 5 See Evans (2013, pp. 118–154), for an attempt to show that some popular secular metaethical views fail in this way. Also see Evans (2004, pp. 223–298), for a similar argument against some other prominent views.

- 6 One might develop an argument from human knowledge of mathematics or logic in this vein, but I shall restrict my consideration to moral truths.
- 7 It is important to note here that the “randomness” involved in Darwinian evolution is consistent with the genetic mutations being guided by God. The mutations are random in the sense that they are not caused or made more likely by the needs of the organisms. Such mutations can be caused by the laws of nature and thus guided by God who creates those laws. If their occurrence does involve some degree of indeterminism at the subatomic level, it would be even easier for God to control the process.
- 8 The historical argument is given mainly in Wolsterstoff (2008), Chapters 2–5.
- 9 Interesting, contemporary biblical scholars, both Jewish and Christian, largely agree that the “image of God” in the biblical text cannot be identified with a property such as rationality. See, for example, Briggs (2010, p. 112).
- 10 This might require an eschatological perspective, in which God’s love and purposes for every person are fulfilled in eternity, even if not fully realized in time. See Linville (2009) for a fuller version of the argument from dignity.
- 11 For a good discussion of the argument Sidgwick considers and ultimately rejects, see Baggett and Walls (2011, pp. 9–21).
- 12 For a very interesting discussion of the idea that morality ought to be a “deep” feature of the universe, see Mavrodes (1986).
- 13 For a fair-minded discussion of the issue that provides references to papers on both sides of the debate, see Davis (2014).
- 14 For my account of the “Pascalian constraints” one would expect to find for any such evidence (the Wide Accessibility Principle and the Easy Resistibility Principle), see Evans (2010, pp. 12–18).
- 15 An exception can be found in the recent work of Moser (2012), who argues that God provides evidence that is recognizable by those willing to acknowledge God’s authority.

References

- Adams, R. (1999) *Finite and Infinite Goods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baggett, D., and Walls, J. (2011) *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Blackburn, S. (2007) “How to be an ethical anti-realist,” in R. Shafer-Landau and T. Cuneo (eds.) *Foundations of Ethics: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 47–57.
- Briggs, R. (2010) “Humans in the image of God and other things Genesis does not make clear.” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 4: 111–126.
- Camus, A. (1955) *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*. New York: Random House.
- Clifford, W. (1877) “The ethics of belief.” *Contemporary Review* 29: 289–309. Reprinted in T. Madigan (ed.) *The Ethics of Belief and Other Essays* Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1999, pp. 70–96.
- Davis, S. (2014) “On preferring that God not exist (or that God exist).” *Faith and Philosophy* 31: 143–159.
- Enoch, D. (2010) “The epistemological challenge to meta-normative realism: How best to understand it, and how to cope with it.” *Philosophical Studies* 148: 413–438.
- Enoch, D. (2011) *Taking Morality Seriously: A Defence of Robust Realism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Evans, S. (2004) *Kierkegaard’s Ethic of Love*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Evans, S. (2010) *Natural Signs and the Knowledge of God: A New Look at Theistic Arguments*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Evans, S. (2013) *God and Moral Obligation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Evans, S. (2016) "Moral arguments for the existence of God." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/moral-arguments-god/> (accessed 21 September 2018).
- Hare, J. (1996) *The Moral Gap*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hare, J. (2015) *God's Command*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Joyce, R. (2016) *Essays in Moral Scepticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kahane, G. (2011) "Should we want God to exist?." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 82: 674–696.
- Kant, I. (1952) *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. Meredith. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kant, I. (1964) *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. H. Paton. New York: Harper & Row.
- Kierkegaard, S. (1985) *Fear and Trembling*, trans. with an introduction by A. Hannay. London: Penguin. Original work published 1843.
- Korsgaard, C. (1996) *The Sources of Normativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Linville, M. (2009) "The moral argument," in W. Craig and J. Moreland (eds.) *Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 391–448.
- Mackie, J. (1977) *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. New York: Penguin.
- Mavrodes, G. (1986) "Religion and the queerness of morality," in R. Audi and W. Wainwright (eds.) *Rationality, Religious Belief, and Moral Commitment: New Essays in the Philosophy of Religion*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp. 213–226.
- Mill, J. (1874) *Nature, the Utility of Religion, and Theism*. London: Longmans, Green, Reader, & Dyer.
- Moser, P. (2012) *The Evidence for God: Religious Knowledge Re-Examined*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Sidgwick, H. (1962) *The Methods of Ethics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Street, S. (2006) "A Darwinian dilemma for realist theories of value." *Philosophical Studies* 127: 109–166.
- Wielenberg, E. (2014) *Robust Ethics: The Metaphysics and Epistemology of Godless Normative Realism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wiggins, D. (1991) *Needs, Values, Truth: Essays in the Philosophy of Value*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wolterstorff, N. (2008) *Justice; Rights and Wrongs*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Prudential Objections to Atheism

AMANDA ASKELL

Suppose that you have a terrible headache that would be relieved if you were to take a new kind of painkiller. This means that you have *prudential reasons* to take that painkiller. Prudential reasons concern what is good for you personally: you have prudential reasons to do things that will improve your well-being or satisfy your desires. Epistemic reasons, by contrast, are reasons that you have for believing things.¹ If a meta-analysis indicates that the new painkiller works well, then you have an epistemic reason to believe that the new painkiller works well.

Now suppose that you find out that any painkiller you take works much better if you believe that it works than if you do not. Does this give you a prudential reason to believe that the medication works? I will call those who answer “no” to this question in all circumstances *exclusivists*. Exclusivists believe that the only reasons we can have for beliefs are the epistemic reasons. This is contrasted with *inclusivists*, who believe that we can have non-epistemic reasons for belief.

Exclusivism is, perhaps, our default position. We don’t usually think that a belief or a lack of belief can be criticized because it does badly on prudential grounds. If the weather report predicts rain tomorrow then you probably wouldn’t find the argument “if you believe it will rain tomorrow then you’ll be sad today, so you should believe it will be sunny tomorrow instead” very compelling. Given this, it might seem odd to come across a chapter on *prudential* objections to atheism. Atheism is, after all, a lack of belief in a deity. To exclusivists, objecting to atheism on prudential grounds sounds a lot like objecting to your beliefs about the weather on the basis of how they will make you feel.

In this chapter I will ask whether atheism can be objected to on prudential grounds and, if so, what the strongest prudential objections to atheism are. In the first section I will outline arguments for and against the view that there can be prudential reasons for belief. In the next section I will explore the physical and psychological benefits of theistic

belief. And in the final section I will explore Pascalian prudential reasons for theistic belief in the form of Pascal's wager. If inclusivism is true and our prudential reasons tip the balance of reasons in favor of theism over atheism, then we have mounted a successful prudential challenge to atheism. Readers may be skeptical of either or both of these claims, and so I will attempt to outline what I take to be the most compelling defenses of them here.

Are There Ever Prudential Reasons for Belief?

If all of your evidence suggests that it will rain tomorrow then it seems rational for you to believe that it will rain tomorrow. Even if you could convince yourself that it will be sunny tomorrow, doing so would result in a belief state that is irrational. I will call this view *exclusivism* and formulate it as follows:

Exclusivism: The only reasons that we can use to evaluate the rationality of belief states are epistemic reasons.

Here "belief states" include belief, suspension of belief, disbelief, and credences.² "Epistemic reasons" can also be interpreted fairly broadly: epistemic reasons could include evidence, prior beliefs, knowledge, logical principles, and so on.³ The important thing is that epistemic reasons are reasons that pertain to the truth or falsity of the proposition in question. Prudential or moral reasons are therefore taken to be non-epistemic reasons.⁴

Even if we think that epistemic reasons are generally the most relevant reasons when evaluating the rationality of a belief state, we might think that in some circumstances we can evaluate a belief state on non-epistemic grounds. We can call this alternative view *inclusivism* and formulate it as follows:

Inclusivism: We can use non-epistemic reasons to evaluate the rationality of belief states.

By non-epistemic reasons I just mean reasons that are not relevant to the truth of the proposition towards which the agent has an epistemic attitude. I will assume here that inclusivists accept that prudential reasons – reasons pertaining to a person's preferences or well-being – can sometimes be relevant to evaluations of the rationality of epistemic states.⁵

Inclusivism and exclusivism both suggest that there is a unified account of the rationality of belief – a thesis which some might wish to reject. They may instead suggest that there is more than one form of rationality and that beliefs can be *epistemically rational* without being *prudentially rational*. Suppose that your evidence suggests that a painkiller doesn't work, but you know that your pain will be reduced (by the placebo effect) if you believe that it works. On what Rinard (2017) calls the "different senses" view of rationality, it could be prudentially rational for you to believe that the painkiller will work even though it is epistemically irrational for you to believe that the painkiller will work.

In order to avoid debates about exclusivism and inclusivism, the different senses view of rational beliefs must also be committed to the claim that there is no all-things-considered rational beliefs that combines epistemic and prudential rationality. Otherwise we could simply ask whether exclusivism or inclusivism is true of all-things-considered rationality.⁶ This gives rise to a key objection to the different senses view: namely, that it does not give us a unified judgment about what it is rational for us to believe. If we think that rationality is *normative* – it tells us what we should do – then we are left with the unsatisfactory response that in one sense we should believe that the painkiller will work and in another sense we shouldn't. But it seems that there is little that we can do with such guidance. If, on the other hand, rationality is *evaluative* – it evaluates how rational or irrational our epistemic states are – then we are again left with our belief that the painkiller works is evaluated as rational in one sense and an irrational in another.⁷

In this chapter, I will assume that there is a single, unified sense of what it means for a belief to be rational, and that inclusivism and exclusivism are both theses about this unified sense of rationality. If the reader still has sympathies for the different senses view then it is worth noting the arguments of this chapter will continue to be relevant to what it is prudentially but not epistemically rational for us to believe.

In most cases in which there are prudential reasons to believe something that is contrary to our evidence, it seems that we ought to take the prudential hit and believe whatever is justified by our evidence. For example, if I would be mildly happier believing that it's going to be sunny but the weather report says that it will rain, then surely I should believe that it will rain even if this will make me mildly less happy. Exclusivism can preserve this intuition because it says that it is never rational to believe something on non-epistemic grounds.

Another consideration that seems to favor exclusivism over inclusivism is the fact that accurate beliefs are extremely useful to us when it comes to our practical goals. I might be mildly happier believing that it's going to be sunny, but this false belief would cause me to do things like leave my umbrella at home, or leave my laptop outside. I might be slightly sadder believing that it's going to rain, but if the belief is accurate then holding it will help me to avoid worse outcomes later on.

We can make this consideration stronger in at least two ways. First, as Clifford (1999) notes in his essay "The Ethics of Belief", our personal beliefs and epistemic practices can be socially propagated. If I believe that it will be sunny because doing so makes me happier, then I will also do things like telling you that it is not going to rain. If you believe me, then you could tell this to others and organize an outdoor event that afternoon. By transmitting my false belief to you, you and everyone you speak with also bear all of the practical costs of my false belief. Moreover, the practice of assessing the truth of propositions using evidence and reason rather than their practical value to us has been of huge advantage to human society. It is the foundation of modern science, and helps guide our collective decision making. It is therefore harmful to undermine this practice.

Second, beliefs are not isolated from each other. If I believe that it will be sunny then this affects my beliefs about what I should wear today, the weather patterns of my local area, the reliability of the weather forecaster, and so on. Any belief held for prudential reasons will have a large impact on my overall belief state, even if the belief in question is a fairly trivial one. Insofar as false or inaccurate beliefs seem to be prudentially bad for

us in most cases, this means that the impact of a single inaccurate belief may be much larger than we would anticipate. Even if my belief that it is sunny does little other than make me mildly happy, its impact on my overall belief state may have prudentially bad consequences for me. This is compounded by the fact that I may also pass on these affected beliefs – for example, about local weather patterns – to others.

We have therefore expressed two challenges for inclusivism: the challenge to explain our intuitions that we should believe what is justified by our evidence even if this involves taking a prudential hit, and the challenge to maintain all of the prudential benefits of accurate beliefs without committing to exclusivism.

Inclusivists can respond to both challenges by pointing out that, in typical cases, our prudential reasons will favor having accurate beliefs over having inaccurate beliefs. If our personal well-being is generally *undermined* by having inaccurate beliefs, then inclusivists and exclusivists will generally make the same recommendations about what to believe. It is therefore not the case that accepting inclusivism commits us to the idea that we can be rational to believe that it's sunny when our evidence suggests that it's going to rain because doing so will make us mildly happier in the short-term. Rinard (2017, p. 136) points out that “wishful thinking” is often not truly in our prudential interests:

What one wishes were true, and what would be good for one to believe is true, often come apart. For example, I wish it were true that, if I jumped off of my roof, I would sprout wings and fly. However, it would be very bad for me to believe that this is true. Believing this would not be an effective means to my ends; it has very low expected value.

This point is only made stronger when we consider the prudential impact that our testimony and epistemic practices will have on others, and the impact that they will have on the *other* beliefs that we will hold. If rationality is sensitive to non-epistemic reasons then it will almost always be rational to have accurate beliefs because inaccuracy spreads and accurate beliefs tend to serve our prudential interests more than inaccurate ones do.

So inclusivism can explain why it is almost always better to adopt beliefs that are accurate even if doing so is prudentially costly to us in the short-term. But inclusivism, unlike exclusivism, is also able to vindicate the intuition that in *some* cases we can be rational to adopt attitudes that are not epistemically justified but are in our prudential interest.

Suppose, for example, that Jenny is unsure about how she is going to do on her law school entrance exam, but she reads a study showing that being slightly more confident that you're going to do well can really improve performance. In this case, we might think that a mild boost to Jenny's confidence won't have very large negative effects, even if we take into account Jenny's testimony and her other beliefs; in part because her new attitude of “mildly confident” is quite close to the one of “unsure.” And such a minor exception to the truth norm of belief is hardly going to do much to undermine scientific inquiry and truth-seeking institutions. So we might think that if the law school entrance exam is sufficiently important then it would be rational for Jenny to be a bit more confident that she will succeed in order to help her performance. Inclusivism can accommodate this, while exclusivism cannot.⁸

This modest kind of inclusivism has some advantages over exclusivism. Modest inclusivism acknowledges that most of the time we should believe in accordance with our evidence, but can acknowledge there may be exceptions to this in extreme cases. These include cases in which we do not need to deviate very much from the epistemic state that is supported by epistemic reasons only, or in which the prudential benefits are so great that they outweigh the general prudential costs of adopting an epistemically unjustified belief.⁹

We might still be worried about the problem of belief propagation described above. Even though Jenny's confidence about how well she will do might seem fairly isolated, it may have a wide-reaching impact on her overall belief state that we are failing to anticipate. There are essentially two responses that the inclusivist can give to this worry. First, Jenny could be required to keep track of how much her beliefs are supported by prudential and epistemic reasons. If she knows that her belief in *P* is rational given prudential reasons, but she also knows that it would not be rational given epistemic reasons alone, and if *Q* is more likely to be true if *P* is true, but a belief in *P* would not be rational on prudential grounds, then Jenny could maintain her confidence in *P* but avoid increasing her confidence in *Q*. However, this has the undesirable consequence of leading to internal inconsistency in Jenny's beliefs.¹⁰

Alternatively, the inclusivist can argue that Jenny should not try to keep track of epistemic and prudential reasons separately. Instead, she should adopt beliefs that are rational given prudential but not epistemic reasons only if they are rational given *all* of the ramifications of adopting the belief in question, including its impact on the agent's other beliefs, her future beliefs, and her testimony to others. I take this response to be the more plausible of the two.

One further objection to inclusivism must be addressed before we move on. Many people will claim that we do not have control over what we believe and that we cannot make ourselves believe things on prudential grounds. If this is the case then arguing that we can be rational to believe things on the basis of non-epistemic reasons might seem like a kind of moot point. If Jenny cannot actually make herself more confident that she will do well then why discuss whether doing so would be rational? Call this the objection from *doxastic involuntarism*: the thesis that we lack control over what we believe.

It does seem plausible that even if we cannot simply choose to adopt a given belief, we can act so that we will end up having a given belief – for example, by choosing to go to a more liberal college instead of a more conservative one.¹¹ If we have indirect but not direct control over our beliefs, then if inclusivism is true we may have prudential reasons to act in ways that will indirectly cause religious belief: for example, by regularly attending church or by reading religious texts.

However, suppose that we lack both direct and indirect control over our beliefs. For this to constitute an objection to inclusivism we also need to think that we cannot make normative or evaluative claims about things that are not within an agent's control. But suppose that this were true. Then, as Reisner (2009, pp. 266–268) points out, the doxastic involuntarism objection would affect exclusivism no less than inclusivism. If an agent could not help but believe whatever it was convenient for her to believe at that given moment and we could not make normative or evaluative claims about things that are beyond an agent's control then exclusivists could not say that there is anything irrational about this agent's beliefs.¹²

So if doxastic involuntarism presents a challenge to inclusivists, it seems to present a similar challenge to exclusivists.¹³ In response to this, exclusivists might argue that, as a matter of fact, prudential reasons never cause us to be disposed to believe propositions whereas epistemic reasons do. As Nayding (2011, §2.2) points out, people often talk as though their religious beliefs are not based on epistemic reasons alone. This is at least *prima facie* reason to think that pragmatic reasons sometimes dispose us to adopt certain beliefs.

Finally, if the claim that people lack direct or indirect control over their beliefs turns out not to be universally true, or if we could hypothetically develop some new technology that could grant us indirect control over our beliefs, then the doxastic voluntarism objection to inclusivism would lose much of its force.¹⁴ Therefore the possibility that doxastic involuntarism is true does not seem to constitute a strong objection to inclusivism.

In this section I have presented some reasons to prefer inclusivism over exclusivism. Even if inclusivism is true, however, we cannot use it to object to atheism unless we also believe that people have prudential reasons to believe in God. Do we have prudential reasons to believe in God? This will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

The Benefits of Theism

James (1956) offers a well-known argument for believing on “passional,” or non-epistemic grounds. James argues that if P and Q are “live hypotheses” – we don’t have definitive evidence that P is true or Q is true – and we must decide between P and Q, then we can “opt” to believe in P or in Q on non-epistemic grounds.

We might think that Jamesian opting is too conservative. It describes cases in which the agent doesn’t have definitive evidence either way (i.e., the “epistemic stakes” are low),¹⁵ and in which the agent will end up with beliefs that do well on purely epistemic grounds (the “epistemic outcomes” are good). But inclusivism is consistent with a more radical kind of opting: we may be rational to opt for hypotheses that we have definitive evidence against if the prudential reasons are high enough, and we may be rational so to opt even in cases where we don’t end up with a belief that is rational on purely epistemic grounds.

Let’s suppose that our only two options are believing in God (B) and not believing in God ($\neg B$), and that the only reasons relevant to the rationality of these epistemic states are epistemic reasons and prudential reasons. For simplicity, suppose that we can give an epistemic value to these belief states, $a(B)$ and $a(\neg B)$, and to the prudential value to these belief states – $v(B)$ and $v(\neg B)$. And suppose that the rational attitude is whichever one does better on some aggregation of the epistemic and prudential reasons, where we give non-zero weight to the prudential reasons. If this is correct then the rationality of belief will increase as $v(B)$ increases relative to $v(\neg B)$ and as $a(B)$ increases relative to $a(\neg B)$. So the more epistemic reasons we have for believing in God, the fewer prudential reasons are required to make this belief rational. And the more prudential reasons that favor believing in God, the more likely it is that our belief will be rational even if the epistemic reasons favor atheism.

Given this, the key questions are: what prudential reasons are there to believe rather than disbelieve in the existence of God? And are these strong enough to make this belief rational for some people, given what is at stake for them, prudentially?

Religious belief is correlated with a greater happiness in many of the existing studies into religion and well-being (Kahneman et al. 1999, p. 365). Koenig, McCullough, and Larson (2012) reviewed over 300 studies that directly examine the relationship between religious involvement and well-being and note that “Prior to the year 2000, 81 of 102 quantitative studies (79 percent) reported greater well-being among those who were more religious. Since the year 2000, at least 175 of 224 additional studies (78 percent) found positive associations between greater religiousness and greater well-being” Koenig et al. (2012, p. 144). Positive effects of religiosity on physical well-being have also been noted. In the same text, Koenig et al. note that at least 120 reports examining the relationship between religious involvement and mortality have been published, and 68% of these studies find that greater religious and spiritual involvement predicted greater longevity (p.491), and the three meta-analyses of the literature on morality and religious attendance found effect sizes of 1.3, 1.37, and 1.43 of religious attendance on mortality (i.e. there was a more than 30% increase in the likelihood of survival on follow-up among those with regular religious attendance; Koenig et al. 2012, p.491).

However, the correlation between religiosity and happiness may depend in part on the nature of one’s religiosity. A 2003 analysis of 34 studies by Hackney and Sanders notes that the psychological benefits of religiosity may require being a “true believer” rather than just a participant in religious practices (Hackney and Sanders 2003, p. 51). And a 2005 analysis of studies on religiosity and stress by Ano and Vasconcelles noted that while “positive religious coping” is associated with positive psychological responses, “negative religious coping” – characterized by behaviors like passive religious deferral and pleading for direct intercession – is correlated with negative psychological responses.

Although much of the recent research into religion and well-being tends to show some positive correlation between religiosity and positive outcomes, Sloan (2006) provides an extensive account of why we might want to be skeptical of these results. For example, he notes the difficulty of deriving an accurate picture from the observational studies into religiosity and mental and physical health. To take the example of religious attendance and mortality mentioned above, he notes that health can be associated with more frequent religious attendance. After all, people who are well are able to attend religious services more frequently than those who are ill. And so what may look like increased religious attendance causing improved physical health can actually be poor health causing both a decrease in religious attendance and higher mortality (Sloan 2006, p.95).

So it seems although we may have some grounds for believing that religiosity has, on average, a positive impact on mental and physical well-being, we also have reasons to be cautious: to avoid concluding too much from this research or ignoring negative correlations between religiosity and well-being. Perhaps we might conservatively conclude that the existing research gives us a mild or moderate prudential reason for believing in God.

This research studies the general impact of religious belief on mental and physical well-being, but it is worth noting that we may be in a privileged position to assess the impact of religious belief on our own personal well-being, and that this might vary a great deal by circumstances. If someone is grieving the loss of a loved one and they know that a belief in a deity has provided comfort during difficult periods of their life, then they may be justified in believing that religious belief will be good for their well-being now. The same is true of others for whom religious beliefs might be a consolation, such as those with a crippling fear of death that is alleviated by a belief in God and an afterlife.¹⁶

Even if we have good reasons to believe that we will personally benefit from religious belief in our current circumstances, Duncan (2013) questions whether we can truly be happy if our happiness is based on a belief that is not fully justified by our evidence. This does seem compelling if agents are deviating greatly from what is justified by their evidence. If your child were to cease communication for many years then you might prefer to live with the unhappy knowledge that the relationship has broken down than to delude yourself with the comforting belief that they will return at any moment. However, this is less compelling if you are deviating only trivially from what is justified by your evidence. If your child has failed to call for two weeks then opting to be more confident that they have simply forgotten to call than your evidence suggests does not have the same flavor of “false happiness.”

All of this suggests that the physical and psychological benefits of theism, insofar as they exist, are not strong enough to warrant anything more than conservative Jamesian opting: for some people they may increase $v(B)$ relative to $v(\neg B)$ enough to make believing in God rational in the inclusivist's sense if their reasons for belief $a(B)$ are at least comparable with their epistemic reasons for disbelief $a(\neg B)$.¹⁷ However, whether this is the case will depend on the evidence and epistemic reasons that the agent has, and the amount of well-being that a belief in God will generate for her. And, given that epistemically unjustified beliefs propagate into other areas of our lives, it seems reasonable to conclude that it is rarely going to be rational to engage in conservative opting on these prudential grounds, even if inclusivism is true.

Pascal's Wager

In the *Pensées* of 1670, Pascal (1910) states that we must either wager for God or against God: we must either believe that God exists or fail to believe that God exists. Pascal argues that we must settle the question by looking at what we have to lose prudentially from each wager. In defense of wagering for God, Pascal offers the following argument (§233):

But there is here an infinity of an infinitely happy life to gain, a chance of gain against a finite number of chances of loss, and what you stake is finite. It is all divided; where-ever the infinite is and there is not an infinity of chances of loss against that of gain, there is no time to hesitate, you must give all. And thus, when one is forced to play, he must renounce reason to preserve his life, rather than risk it for infinite gain, as likely to happen as the loss of nothingness.

	God exists (p)	God doesn't exist ($1-p$)
Believe in God (B)	∞	f_1
Don't believe in God ($\neg B$)	f_2	f_3

Figure 33.1

Pascal claims that if we wager for God then if God exists we will be rewarded with infinite happiness in heaven, and if God does not exist we will have experienced a finite loss at most.¹⁸ But if we wager against God then we can at best expect finite happiness in this lifetime regardless of whether God exists or not because we will not go to heaven when we die. We can represent this as follows (Figure 33.1), where ∞ represents infinite happiness and f_1 , f_2 and f_3 represent finite levels of happiness or unhappiness:

Here p and $1-p$ represent the probability that God exists given our evidence, where p is a real number between zero (0%) and one (100%) inclusive. Given this, we can formulate our version of the argument from Pascal's wager as follows:¹⁹

- (1) A greater probability of an infinitely good outcome is always better than a lower probability of an infinitely good outcome *or* any finitely good outcome.
- (2) The probability of an infinitely good outcome is greater if we believe in God than if we do not believe in God.
- (3) Therefore it is better to believe in God than to disbelieve in God.

The first premise of this argument is similar to a principle proposed by Schlesinger (1994, p. 97) that we should “try and increase the probability of obtaining the prospective prize.”²⁰ This should surely strike us as a plausible principle. Imagine you can pick one of three lottery tickets. Ticket A has a 90% chance of getting you into heaven and a 10% chance of resulting in nothing, ticket B has a 1% chance of getting you into heaven, and ticket C has a 100% chance of getting you a new car. You know all of this with certainty. Which ticket should you choose? It seems clear that ticket A is better than ticket B, and that A would be better than B even if the “loss” condition of B were something nice like \$1000. We wouldn't trade \$1000 for an 89% reduction in the chance of going to heaven. It also seems clear that tickets A and B are both better than ticket C. We wouldn't trade a new car if we were guaranteed some chance of living as long as we liked in a state of bliss.

We can amend standard expected utility theory to accommodate (1) by adopting something like Bartha's (2007) relative utility theory. But for now I will simply adopt (1) as a principle that we want our theory of prudential rationality to vindicate. This lets us avoid Hájek's “mixed strategies” objection to Pascal's wager. Hájek (2003) points out that there is *some* chance that God will reward us for disbelief (i.e. we were too quick to assign finite value to disbelief in God). And since an infinitely good outcome multiplied by a finite probability will always result in infinite expectations, the expected value of believing in God and failing to believe in God are both infinite. While this may be true if we employ standard expected utility theory, it is false if we adopt a theory like relative

utility that vindicates (1) and says a greater chance of gaining an infinitely good outcome is better than a lower chance of an infinitely good outcome.

Premise (2) says that we are more likely to get an infinitely good outcome if we believe in God than if we don't. This is at least *prima facie* plausible insofar as many of the Gods we have testimony about – those in most major religions – reward belief and punish disbelief, and not vice versa. But we will discuss this in more detail below.

There are several well-known objections to Pascal's wager. For example, this argument only works if we assign a non-zero probability to God's existence. Some may argue that we would be rational to have credence zero in God and so the argument fails. But it is extremely implausible that anyone could have evidence that would make it rational to assign such an extreme probability to God's existence if there is at least some concept of God that is logically coherent.²¹ Finitists might argue that it is not possible for heaven to produce infinite happiness. But even if we are confident that finitism is true, we are surely not *certain* that it is true. All that the wager requires is a non-zero credence that heaven is infinitely good. Finally, some might argue that we simply cannot believe in God on Pascalian grounds. But even if doxastic involuntarism is true, a belief could be evaluated as rational on Pascalian grounds (if inclusivism is true) and we could have reasons to try to take actions that make it more likely that we will come to believe in God in the future.²²

Arguably the central objections to Pascal's wager are the "many gods" objection and a related "many actions" objection. The many gods objection points out that there is more than one god we could wager for. For example, perhaps there is an atheist-loving god who rewards skeptical disbelief and punishes theistic belief in general or Pascalian theistic belief in particular.²³ Or we could wager for Odin or the Flying Spaghetti Monster rather than God. So we were wrong to just have two columns in our decision matrix.

The many actions objection points out that there are many ways that we can wager for or against God. Perhaps God is more likely to reward good deeds than belief, or perhaps leading a life of bravery and dying in battle is the best way to wager if we want to enter Valhalla. So we were wrong to have just two rows in our decision matrix.

Let's just expand our table a little bit by supposing that we're uncertain about whether the belief-rewarding god exists or the atheist-rewarding god exists. And suppose that the belief-rewarding god will overlook your lack belief in god if you're good (i.e. they will let all believers and all good non-believers into heaven) but the non-belief-rewarding god does not tolerate either evil or belief (i.e. they let only good non-believers into heaven). The decision matrix would then be as in Figure 33.2.

What should we do in this case? We can see that there are three belief-act pairs that have some chance of producing infinite happiness – A, B, and C – so by (1) we can at least rule out the belief-act pair D. By (1), we should prefer whatever belief-act pair has the greatest probability of leading to infinite happiness. In this case the probability that A will lead to infinite happiness is p , the probability that B will lead to infinite happiness is p , and the probability that C will lead to infinite happiness is $p + q$ (assuming that the two gods are mutually cannot both exist). So in this case C is the best action by principle (1).

From this procedure, we can see many gods and many actions objection are not really objections to the validity of Pascal's wager at all: they are just objections to the conclusion that belief in God is the best way to wager. Or, to put this a different way: if we are making the many gods and many actions objections, we are no longer questioning whether we should wager, we are just asking how best to do so.

	God (p)	No god ($1-p$)	Atheist god (q)	No atheist god ($1-q$)
(A) Believe in God and be good	∞	f	f	f
(B) Believe in God and be evil	∞	f	f	f
(C) Don't believe and be good	∞	f	∞	f
(D) Don't believe and be evil	f	f	f	f

Figure 33.2

So what is the best way to wager? The answer from principle (1) is that we ought to believe and act in whatever way will maximize the probability that we will get an infinitely good outcome. We might deny that (2) follows from this – perhaps the best combinations of actions and beliefs does not include wagering for God – but the question of how we ought to wager is not a question we can give a glib answer to. We cannot simply make up an atheist-loving god and claim that lack of belief is now the most likely road to infinite happiness. We cannot insist that the actions that we are currently undertaking are – through some extraordinary stroke of luck – the very actions that we think are most likely to lead to infinite happiness. And we cannot claim that we happen to have exactly equal credences in all deities ever proposed so that all deity wagers are equally good (not that this would help, since the smallest piece of testimonial evidence for one deity over the others would be enough to disrupt this delicate equilibrium). All claims of fortuitous beliefs of this sort should strike us as disingenuous and, insofar as they are claims about what it is rational for us to believe, are the subject of rational scrutiny.

I cannot answer the difficult question of what we ought to wager for in this chapter: this remains an open question. There may be secular hypotheses, such as simulation hypotheses,²⁴ that increase the probability we assign to gaining infinite happiness without the need to invoke religion. The actions and beliefs that such hypotheses recommend, if any, may be better than the theistic alternatives. However, this difficulty would not justify throwing up our hands in defeat or rejecting the wager. The question of what we ought to do is often a complicated one, and we should not be surprised that adding infinite happiness to the mix makes it even more complicated.

There are two important objections to Pascal's wager – as I have formulated it here – that we must mention before concluding. The first is what we might call the problem of ever better heavens. After all, not all infinitely good outcomes strike us as equally good. Suppose that one religion offers us a heaven that is an infinite sequence of days at some positive happiness level, while another religion offers us a heaven that is an infinite sequence of days at ten times this positive happiness level. Now suppose you can choose between a 99% chance of the first heaven and a 98% chance of the second heaven.

It is at least not obvious that it is rational to prefer the first ticket to the second, even though this would be strictly implied by (1) as it is currently stated. In order to accommodate this, we might want to look not at the total utility of different infinitely good outcomes, but at the difference in their utilities as Colyvan (2008) suggests in his relative expectations theory.

A final worry for Pascal's wager is that it leads to a kind of *fanaticism* about infinitely good outcomes: our beliefs and actions will be entirely dictated by small probabilities of infinitely good outcomes.²⁵ If we accept premise (1) then infinite outcomes do seem to completely wash out all finite considerations when it comes to how we ought to act. And if inclusivism is true and inclusivists don't give bounded weight to prudential considerations when assessing the rationality of belief, then infinite prudential considerations could completely determine what we ought to believe. This seems to leave us with a trilemma: either we must accept fanaticism,²⁶ or we must reject premise (1), or we must reject unbounded inclusivism. Insofar as fanaticism seems implausible, we have *prima facie* reasons to doubt two of the important premises of Pascal's wager.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have argued that prudential objections to atheism rely on two claims: that inclusivism is true – that it can be rational for us to adopt beliefs for prudential reasons – and that we have prudential reasons for believing in God. I began by offering the considerations in favor of a modest form of inclusivism. I then argued that although agents may experience personal consolation or greater personal happiness by believing in God, it is unclear whether these reasons are sufficient to justify believing in God on prudential grounds if our inclusivism is sufficiently modest.

Pascal's wager gets around this by presenting stronger prudential reasons for theism. If we can be more confident that we will experience an infinitely good outcome if we are theists than if we are atheists, then this seems to constitute a strong prudential reason to believe in God. If we accept Pascal's wager, however, then we seem to be forced to conclude that there are prudential objections not merely to atheism, but to *any* belief that does not increase the probability that we will experience some infinitely good outcome, no matter how evidentially well-grounded that belief is. Therefore if Pascal's wager constitutes a strong prudential objection to atheism, atheists can at least take consolation that they are in good company.

Notes

- 1 Moral reasons are another important type of reason, but I will not discuss moral reasons for or against theism in this chapter.
- 2 Credences are real numbers between zero and one that we assign to propositions in accordance with their subjective likelihood. For example, most of us will have a credence of 0.5 that a fair coin will land heads.
- 3 *Evidentialism* is the view that we ought to believe in accordance with our evidence, but exclusivism is consistent with a wider range of views than just evidentialism.

- 4 Even if prudential reasons cannot be epistemic reasons, the fact that that certain kinds of epistemic reasons exist could itself be an epistemic consideration. For example, the fact that I have prudential reasons to believe *P* may count as evidence against my current belief that *P* because it increases my evidence that I would believe *P* even if my evidence did not support that belief. See White (2010) for a discussion of whether learning the causal foundations of one's belief undermines the rationality of that belief.
- 5 Inclusivists could hold we should evaluate belief states *only* on the basis of non-epistemic reasons, so that epistemic reasons are instrumental and prudential reasons are terminal. Or they could assign some terminal value to epistemic reasons. I will try to remain agnostic between different inclusivist views.
- 6 Moreover, if all-things-considered rationality is a combination of epistemic and prudential rationality, then it is likely to be an inclusivist account of rational belief.
- 7 See Rinard (2017, p. 128) for a discussion of the "different senses" view of rationality.
- 8 One complication here is that Jenny seems to be "bootstrapping" her way to an accurate belief about her own performance. To avoid this, we can suppose that Jenny's evidence suggests that she will score 50 on the exam, but if she believes she will score 70 on the exam then her expected score is 65. Rinard (2017, p. 124) discusses similar cases in which an ill patient may be rational to believe she'll survive or an athlete may be rational to be confident that she will win, even if the evidence in both cases only warrants uncertainty.
- 9 Considering all arguments for exclusivism is beyond the scope of this chapter. Rinard (2017) has a helpful discussion Kelly's (2002) "basing" argument and Shah's (2006) "transparency" argument. Others argue that the truth aim is part of the concept or nature of belief. But it seems conceptually coherent for beliefs to be adopted partly on prudential reasons. See Chignell (2016) for an overview of these issues.
- 10 We might be able to avoid strict inconsistency by either having a notion of prudential entailment such that Jenny has a prudential reason to increase her belief in *Q* to the point of internal consistency. Or we could simply accept that we sometimes have prudential reasons to be internally inconsistent.
- 11 The distinction between direct and indirect control over belief is discussed in Rinard (2017, p. 129).
- 12 Both exclusivists and inclusivists could argue that their theses are evaluative rather than descriptive and that we can evaluate states that agents lack control over. Alternatively, they could deny that we always lack direct control over our beliefs, or they could insist that indirect control over beliefs is sufficient for them to be the subject of normative or evaluative claims. The key point is that the objection and responses to it don't give us a reason to favor exclusivism over inclusivism.
- 13 The exclusivist could respond that agents generally cannot help but have beliefs that are rational given epistemic reasons. But it is far from clear that this is true and, even if it were, this would make exclusivism a largely descriptive rather than a normative thesis.
- 14 Such a technology need not be overly speculative: if we developed a drug that made people more susceptible to suggestion then this would offer us some indirect control over what we believe.
- 15 James (1956) argues that we cannot come to believe "dead hypotheses" on passional grounds.
- 16 This is similar to Beattie's 1776 argument from consolation (Beattie 1971), discussed in Jordan (2013, §5).
- 17 This might be thought of as an "act of faith." However, we might think that faith is not orthogonal to epistemic rationality in this way. See Buchak (2012) for an account of epistemically rational faith.

- 18 Pascal goes on to argue that wagering for God is not actually be more costly for us in this lifetime than wagering against God is, but I will not assume this.
- 19 This version of Pascal's wager is different from Pascal's original formulation, but we will see that it presents a stronger challenge to traditional objections to the wager.
- 20 Peterson (2011) appeals to a similar "better-chances" principle in his critique of Colyvan's (2008) relative expectation theory for one-shot infinities, discussed further in Colyvan and Hájek (2016).
- 21 This is true if credences are real-valued. We could argue, as Oppy (1990) points out, that our credence in God is infinitesimal. But I assume that most people's evidence warrants at least some positive, non-infinitesimal credence in theism, even among those who are highly skeptical of theism.
- 22 See Chignell (2016, §3.4) for an overview of responses to the doxastic involuntarism objection.
- 23 "Divine hiddenness" – the fact that God does not simply reveal themselves to us – seems to be some evidence for such an atheist god. But there is also a decent amount of evidence against the atheist god and in favor of a God that is hidden for other reasons. See Jordan (2006, Chapter 7).
- 24 See Bostrom (2003) for an explanation and discussion of simulation hypotheses.
- 25 For a discussion of the fanaticism problem, see Beckstead (2013, Chapters 6 and 7).
- 26 We should not completely rule out the possibility that fanaticism is true: it may be that a well-considered decision procedure optimizing for infinitely good outcomes will not lead to act recommendations that radically diverge from common sense.

References

- Ano G., and Vasconcelles, E. (2005) Religious coping and psychological adjustment to stress: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 61: 461–480.
- Bartha, P. (2007) "Taking stock of infinite value: Pascal's wager and relative utilities." *Synthese* 154: 5–52.
- Beattie, J. (1971) *An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth, In Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism, Part III, Ch. III* (first ed. 1770; second 1776). New York: Garland.
- Beckstead N. (2013) "On the overwhelming importance of shaping the far future." Doctoral dissertation, Rutgers University Department of Philosophy.
- Bostrom, N. (2003) "Are you living in a computer simulation." *Philosophical Quarterly*, 53: 243–255.
- Buchak, L. (2012) "Can it be rational to have faith?" in J. Chandler and V. Harrison (eds.) *Probability in the Philosophy of Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chignell, A. (2016) "The ethics of belief." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/ethics-belief/> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Clifford, W. (1999) "The ethics of belief," in T. Madigan (ed.) *The Ethics of Belief and Other Essays* Amherst: Prometheus Books, pp. 70–96. Originally published 1877.
- Colyvan, M. (2008) "Relative expectation theory." *Journal of Philosophy* 105: 37–44.
- Colyvan, M., and Hájek, A. (2016) "Making ado without expectations." *Mind*, 125: 829–857.
- Duncan, C. (2013) "Religion and secular utility: Happiness, truth, and pragmatic arguments for theistic belief." *Philosophy Compass* 8: 381–399.
- Hackney, C., and Sanders, G. (2003) Religiosity and mental health: A meta-analysis of recent studies. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42: 43–55.
- Hájek, A. (2003) "Waging war on Pascal's wager." *Philosophical Review* 112: 27–56.

- James, W. (1956) *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*. New York: Dover. Original work published 1896.
- Jordan, J. (2006) *Pascal's Wager: Pragmatic Arguments and Belief in God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kahneman, D., Diener, E., and Schwarz, N. (eds.) (1999) *Well-being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Kelly, T. (2002) "The rationality of belief and other propositional attitudes." *Philosophical Studies* 110: 163–196.
- Koenig, H., McCullough M., and Larson D. (eds.) (2012) *Handbook of Religion and Health*, 2nd edn. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Nayding, I. (2011) "Conceptual evidentialism." *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 92: 39–65.
- Oppy, G. (1990) "On Rescher on Pascal's wager." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 30: 159–168.
- Pascal, B. (1910) *Pensées*, trans. W. Trotter, London: Dent. Original work published 1670.
- Peterson, M. (2011) "A new twist to the St. Petersburg Paradox" *Journal of Philosophy* 108: 697–699.
- Reisner, A. (2009) "The possibility of pragmatic reasons for belief and the wrong kind of reasons problem." *Philosophical Studies* 145, 257–272.
- Rinard, S. (2017) "No exception for belief" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 94: 121–143.
- Schlesinger, G. (1994) "A central theistic argument," in J. Jordan (ed) *Gambling on God: Essays on Pascal's Wager*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Shah, N. (2006) "A new argument for evidentialism." *Philosophical Quarterly* 56: 481–498.
- Sloan R. (2006) *Blind Faith: The Unholy Alliance of Religion and Medicine*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- White, R. (2010) "You just believe that because" *Philosophical Perspectives* 24: 573–615.

Bibliography

- Adams, R. (1999) *Finite and Infinite Goods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Adler, R. (2001) "Women in the executive suite: Correlate to higher profits." *Harvard Business Review* 79: 30.
- Affolter, J. (2007) "Human nature as god's purpose." *Religious Studies* 43: 443–455.
- Alexander, M. (2012) *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: New Press.
- Allport, G., and Kramer, B. (1946) "Some roots of prejudice." *Journal of Psychology* 22: 9–30.
- Almeder, R. (1986) "A definition of pragmatism." *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 3: 79–87.
- Almeder, R. (1992) *Blind Realism: An Essay on Human Knowledge and Natural Science*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Almeder, R. (1998) *Harmless Naturalism: The Limits of Science and the Nature of Philosophy*. Chicago: Open Court.
- Almeder, R. (2011) *Truth and Scepticism*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Almeder, R. (2012) *Pragmatism: An Overview*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Almeida, M., and Oppy, G. (2003) "Sceptical theism and evidential arguments from evil." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 81: 496–516.
- Alston, W. (1982) "Religious experience and religious belief." *Noûs* 16: 3–12.
- Alston, W. (1986) "Is religious belief rational?" in S. Harrison (ed.) *The Life of Religion* Lanham: University Press of America, pp. 1–15.
- Alston, W. (1991) *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- American Academy of Pediatrics (1998) "Policy statement: Guidance for effective discipline." *Pediatrics* 101: 723–728.
- American Academy of Pediatrics (2000) "Policy statement: Corporal punishment in schools." *Pediatrics* 106: 343.
- Amesbury, R. (2016) "Fideism." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <http://platos.tanford.edu/entries/fideism/> (accessed 17 September 2018).
- Anderson, D. (2012) "Sceptical theism and value judgments." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 72: 27–39.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, G., and Squires, D. (2010) *Measuring the US Health Care System: A Cross-National Comparison*. The Commonwealth Fund. Available at https://www.commonwealthfund.org/sites/default/files/documents/___media_files_publications_issue_brief_2010_jun_1412_anderson_measuring_us_hlt_care_sys_intl_ib.pdf (accessed 25 September 2018).
- Anderson, G., Frogner, B., and Reinhardt, U. (2006) "Health care spending and use of information technology in OECD countries." The Commonwealth Fund. Available at <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/journal-article/2006/may/health-care-spending-and-use-information-technology-oecd> (accessed 25 September 2018).
- Andersson, S., and Greenspan, L. (1999) *Russell on Religion*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Ano, G., and Vasconcelles, E. (2005) "Religious coping and psychological adjustment to stress: A meta-analysis." *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 61: 461–480.
- Anscombe, G. (1958) "Modern moral philosophy." *Philosophy* 33: 1–19.
- Anstey, P. (2005) "Experimental versus speculative natural philosophy," in P. Anstey and J. Schuster (eds.) *The Science of Nature in the Seventeenth Century: Patterns of Change in Early Modern Natural Philosophy*. Studies in History and Philosophy of Science 19, Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 215–242.
- Appleby, S. (2000) *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Aptheker, H. (1970) *The Urgency of Marxist-Christian Dialogue*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Aral, S., and Holmes, K. (1996) "Social and behavioral determinants of the epidemiology of STDs: Industrialized and developing countries," in S. Morse, R. Ballard, K. Holmes, and A. Moreland (eds.) *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*, 3rd edn. New York: McGraw-Hill, pp. 39–76.
- Arias, E. (2016) "Changes in life expectancy by race and hispanic origin in the United States." NCHS Data Brief No. 244, CDC. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db244.htm> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Aristotle (1984) *Complete Works*, ed. J. Barnes. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Armstrong, D. (1978) "Naturalism, materialism, and first philosophy." *Philosophia* 8: 261–276.
- Arneson, R. (2003) "Liberal neutrality on the good: An autopsy," in S. Wall and G. Klosko (eds.) *Perfectionism and Neutrality*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Atran, S. (2006) "Religion's innate origins and evolutionary background," in P. Carruthers, S. Laurence, and S. Stich (eds.) *The Innate Mind*, Vol. 2. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 302–317.
- Atran, S. (2010) *Talking to the Enemy: Faith, Brotherhood, and the (Un)Making of Terrorists*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Audi, R. (1971) "On the meaning and justification of violence," in J. Schaffer (ed.) *Violence*. New York: David McKay, pp. 45–101.
- Audi, R. (2000) *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Audi, R. (2004) *The Good in the Right: A Theory of Intuition and Intrinsic Value*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Audi, R. (2007) "Divine command morality and the autonomy of ethics." *Faith and Philosophy* 24: 121–143.
- Audi, R. (2011) *Democratic Authority and the Separation of Church and State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Augustine (1982) *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. J. Taylor. New York: Newman.
- Augustine (1998) *The City of God Against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R. Dyson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Augustine (1998) *Confessions*, trans. H. Chadwick. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Avalos, H. (2005) *Fighting Words: The Origins of Religious Violence*. Amherst: Prometheus Books.
- Avezac-Lavigne, C. (1875) *Diderot et la société du baron d'Holbach*. Paris: Leroux.

- Aviles J., Whelan S., Hernke D., et al. (2001) "Intercessory prayer and cardiovascular disease progression in a coronary care unit population: A randomized controlled trial." *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* 76: 1192–1198.
- Ayer, A. (2001) *Language, Truth and Logic*. London: Penguin Books.
- Babie, P., and Mylius, B. (2012) "The future of religious freedom in Australian schools." *International Journal of Educational Reform* 21: 173–191.
- Badiou, A. (1994) "Being by numbers: Lauren Sedovsky talks with Alain Badiou." *ArtForum International* 33: 84–87, 118, 123–124.
- Badiou, A. (2001) *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*. London: Verso.
- Badiou, A. (2004) "Mathematics and philosophy: The grand style and the little style," in *Alain Badiou: Theoretical Writings*, ed. and trans. R. Brassier, and A. Toscano. London: Continuum, pp. 103–118.
- Badiou, A. (2006) *Briefings on Existence: A Short Treatise on Transitory Ontology*, trans. N. Madarasz. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Badiou, A. (2007). *Being and Event*, trans. O. Feltham. London: Continuum.
- Badiou, A. (2008) *Conditions*, trans. S. Corcoran. London: Continuum.
- Badiou, A. (2011) *Entretiens 1, 1981–1996*. Paris: Noûs.
- Baggett, D., and Walls, J. (2011) *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baker, L. (2007) *The Metaphysics of Everyday Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Balaguer, M. (1998) *Platonism and Anti-Platonism in Mathematics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Banks, J. Mamot, M., and Oldfield, Z. (2006) "Disease and disadvantage in the United States and in England." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 295: 2037–2045.
- Banner, L. (1980) *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: A Radical for Women's Rights*. Boston: Little & Brown.
- Barber, N. (2011) "A cross-national test of the uncertainty hypothesis of religious belief." *Cross-Cultural Research* 45: 318–333.
- Barna, G. (2004) "Born again Christians just as likely to divorce as are non-Christians." *Barna Research Online*. Available at <https://www.barna.com/research/born-again-christians-just-as-likely-to-divorce-as-are-non-christians/> (accessed 25 September 2018).
- Baron, J., and Spranca, M. (1997) "Protected values." *Organisational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes* 70: 1–16.
- Barrett, C. (1997) "Newman and Wittgenstein on the rationality of religious belief," in I. Ker (ed.) *Newman and Conversion*. Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, pp. 89–99.
- Barrett, J. (2004) *Why Would Anyone Believe in God?* Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.
- Barro, R. (2004) "Spirit of capitalism: Religion and economic development/" *Harvard International Review*. Winter. Available at <http://hir.harvard.edu/article/?a=1193> (accessed 25 September 2018).
- Barro, R. and McCleary, R. (2003) "Religion and economic growth." NBER Working Paper No. w9682. Available at <https://ssrn.com/abstract=406054> (accessed 25 September 2018).
- Barth, K. (1933) *The Epistle to the Romans*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bartha, P. (2007) "Taking stock of infinite value: Pascal's wager and relative utilities." *Synthese* 154: 5–52.
- Batson, D., and Ventis, W. (1982) *The Religious Experience: A Social-Psychological Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Beall, J., and Restall, G. (2000) "Logical pluralism." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 78: 475–493.
- Beall, J., and Restall, G. (2006) *Logical Pluralism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Beattie, J. (1971) *An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth, In Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism, Part III, Ch. III*. New York: Garland.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Beckstead N. (2013) "On the overwhelming importance of shaping the far future." Doctoral dissertation, Rutgers University Department of Philosophy.
- Beecher, H. (1885) *Evolution and Religion*. New York: Fords, Howard, & Hulbert.
- Beeghley, L. (2003) *Homicide: A Sociological Explanation*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Beeson, M. (1985) *Foundations of Constructive Mathematics: Meta-Mathematical Studies*. Berlin: Springer.
- Behe, M. (1996) *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*. New York: Free Press.
- Bencivenga, E. (2002) "Putting language first: The liberation of logic from ontology," in D. Jacquette (ed.) *A Companion to Philosophical Logic*. Malden: Blackwell, pp. 293–304.
- Bennett, L. (2007) *The Feminine Mistake*. New York: Voice.
- Bennett-Hunter, G. (2014) *Ineffability and Religious Experience*. London: Pickering & Chatto.
- Bennett-Hunter, G. (2016). Ineffability. *Philosophia*, 44. Available at <http://links.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2Fs11406-016-9772-1.pdf> (accessed 22 October 2018).
- Benson, H., Dusek, J., Sherwood, J., et al. (2006) "Study of the therapeutic effects of intercessory prayer (STEP) in cardiac bypass patients: A multicenter randomized trial of uncertainty and certainty of receiving intercessory prayer." *American Heart Journal* 151: 934–942.
- Berg, A., and Ostry, J. (2011) "Inequality and unsustainable growth: two sides of the same coin?" IMF Staff Discussion Note. Available at www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2011/sdn1108.pdf (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Bergier, N. (1771) *Examen du Matérialisme, ou Réfutation du "Système de la nature"*. Paris: Humbot.
- Bergmann, M., and Kain, P. (2014) "Challenges to moral and religious belief: Overview and future directions," in M. Bergmann and P. Kain (eds.) *Challenges to Moral and Religious Belief: Disagreement and Evolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1–19.
- Bering, J., and Johnson, D. (2005) "Oh Lord ... you perceive my thoughts from afar: Recursiveness and the evolution of supernatural agency." *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 5: 118–142.
- Bernauer, J. (2004) "Michel Foucault's philosophy of religion: An introduction to the non-fascist life," in J. Bernauer and J. Carrette (eds.) *Michel Foucault and Theology: The Politics of Religious Experience*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Berman, D. (1988) *A History of Atheism in Britain* Abingdon: Routledge.
- Besthorn, R. (1969) *Textkritische Studien zum Werk Holbachs*. Berlin: Rütten & Loening.
- Betenson, T. (2016) "Anti-theodicy." *Philosophy Compass* 11: 56–65.
- Bijl, R., de Graaf, R., Hiripi, E., Kessler, R. C., Kohn, R., and Wittchen, H. (2003). "Prevalence of treated and untreated mental disorders in five countries." *Health Affairs* 22: 122–133.
- Billinge, H. (2000) "Applied constructive mathematics: On Hellman's "Mathematical Constructivism in Spacetime." *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 51: 299–318.
- Bishop, E. (1967) *Foundations of Constructive Analysis*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Bishop, G., Thomas, R., Wood, J. and Gwon, M. (2010) "Americans' scientific knowledge and beliefs about human evolution in the year of Darwin." *Reports of the National Center for Science Education* 30(3): 16–18.
- Blackburn, S. (1984) *Spreading the Word*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Blackburn, S. (2007) "How to be an ethical anti-realist," in R. Shafer-Landau and T. Cuneo (eds.) *Foundations of Ethics: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 47–57.
- Blackburn, S. (2010) "Sharon Street on the independent normative truth as such." Available at <http://www2.phil.cam.ac.uk/~swb24/PAPERS/Meanstreet.htm> (accessed 19 September 2018).
- Blackford, R., and Schuklenk, U. (2013) *50 Great Myths about Atheism*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Blatti, S. (2012) "Death's distinctive harm." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 49: 317–330.
- Bleazby, J. (2013) *Social Reconstruction Learning: Dualism, Dewey and Philosophy in Schools*. London: Routledge.

- Blessing, K. (2013) "Atheism and the meaningfulness of life," in S. Bullivant and M. Ruse (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 104–118.
- Bloch, E. (2009) *Atheism in Christianity*. New York: Verso.
- Block, N., and Stalnaker, R. (1999) "Conceptual analysis, dualism, and the explanatory gap." *Philosophical Review* 108: 1–46.
- Bloom, P. (2008) "Does religion make you nice? Does atheism make you mean?" Available at http://www.lateslate.com/articles/life/faithbased/2008/11/does_religion_make_you_nice.html (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Blumenthal, J., Babyak, M. A., Ironson, G., Thoresen, C., Powell, L., Czajkowski, S... The ENRICH Investigators (2007) "Spirituality, religion, and clinical outcomes in patients recovering from an acute myocardial infarction." *Psychosomatic Medicine* 69: 501–508.
- Boehm, C. (2012) *Moral Origins: The Evolution of Virtue, Altruism, and Shame*. New York: Basic Books.
- Boethius, A. (1999) *The Consolation of Philosophy*, rev. edn. London: Penguin.
- Bonjour, L. (1998) *In Defense of Pure Reason: A Rationalist Account of A Priori Justification*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Borghol, N., Suderman, M., McCardle, W., et al. (2012) "Associations with early-life socio-economic position in adult DNA methylation," *International Journal of Epidemiology* 41: 62–74.
- Bostrom, N. (2003) "Are you living in a computer simulation?" *Philosophical Quarterly*, 53: 243–255.
- Botting, E. (2006) *Family Feuds: Wollstonecraft, Burke and Rousseau on the Transformation of the Family*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Bourget, D., and Chalmers, D. (2014) "What do philosophers believe?" *Philosophical Studies* 170: 465–500.
- Bouwsma, O. (1965) "Naturalism," in *Philosophical Essays*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, pp. 71–84.
- Bowen, K. (1979) *Model Theory for Modal Logic: Kripke Models for Modal Predicate Calculi*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Boyd, R. (1988) "How to be a moral realist," in G. Sayre-McCord (ed.) *Essays on Moral Realism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp. 181–228.
- Boyer, P. (2001) *Religion Explained*. London: Random House.
- Boyle, R. (1688) *A Disquisition About the Final Causes of Natural Things: Wherein it is Inquir'd Whether, And (if at all) with What Cautions, a Naturalist should admit Them?* London: John Taylor.
- Boyle, R. (1996) *A Free Enquiry into the Vulgarly Received Notion of Nature*, ed. E. Davis and M. Hunter. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bradford, G. (2015) *Achievement*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bradley, B. (2009) "Analyzing harm." Unpublished paper.
- Bricker, P. (2001) "Island universes and the analysis of modality," in G. Preyer and F. Siebelt (eds.) *Reality and Humean Supervenience: Essays on the Philosophy of David Lewis*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 27–56.
- Bridges, D. (1979) *Constructive Functional Analysis*. London: Pitman.
- Bridges, D. (1981) "Towards a constructive foundation for quantum mechanics," in F. Richman (ed.) *Constructive Mathematics: Lecture Notes in Mathematics*. Springer Lecture Notes in Mathematics 873. Berlin: Springer, pp. 260–273.
- Bridges, D. (1995) "Constructive mathematics and unbounded operators – a reply to Hellman." *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 24: 549–561.
- Bridges, D. (1999) "Can constructive mathematics be applied in physics?" *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 28: 439–453.
- Bridges, D., and Palmgren, E. (2013) "Constructive mathematics." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2013/entries/mathematics-constructive/> (accessed 21 September 2018).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Briggs, R. (2010) "Humans in the image of God and other things Genesis does not make clear." *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 4: 111–126.
- Brighouse, H. (2006) *On Education*. London: Routledge.
- Brightman, E. S. (1963) "Russell's philosophy of religion," in P. Schilpp (ed.) *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell*, Vol. 2, 3rd edn. New York: Harper & Row, pp. 537–556.
- Brink, D. (1984) "Moral realism and the sceptical arguments from disagreement and queerness." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 62: 111–125.
- Brink, D. (1989) *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brink, D. (2007) "The autonomy of ethics," in M. Martin (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 149–165.
- Brogaard, B. (2016) "Against naturalism about truth," in K. Clark (ed.) *Blackwell Companion to Naturalism*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Brogaard, B. (2017) "In search of mentons: Panpsychism, physicalism and the missing link," in G. Brüntrup and L. Jaskolla (eds.), *Panpsychism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 130–152.
- Brooks, A. (2006) *Who Really Cares?* New York: Basic Books.
- Brown, M. (2011) "Godless in Tumourville: Christopher Hitchens interview." *The Telegraph*, 25 March.
- Brueckner, A. (1994) "The structure of the sceptical argument." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 54: 827–835.
- Brueckner, A. (2005) "Knowledge, evidence, and scepticism according to Williamson." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 70: 436–443.
- Buchak, L. (2012) "Can it be rational to have faith?," in J. Chandler and V. Harrison (eds.) *Probability in the Philosophy of Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bueno, O., and Shalkowski, S. (2009) "Modalism and logical pluralism." *Mind* 118: 295–321.
- Bullock, A. (1952) *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*. London: Odhams.
- Burkhardt, F., et al. (eds) (1985–) *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Burgess, J. (1992) "Proofs about proofs: A defense of classical logic, Part I: The aims of classical logic," in M. Detlefsen (ed.) *Proof, Logic, and Formalization*. New York: Routledge, pp. 1–23.
- Burgess, J. (2009) *Philosophical Logic*. Princeton Foundations of Contemporary Philosophy, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Burks, A. (1973) "Logic, computers, and men." *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 46: 39–57.
- Bushman, B., Ridge, R., Das, E., Key, C., and Busath, G. (2007) "When God sanctions killing: Effect of scriptural violence on aggression." *Psychological Science* 18: 204–207.
- Byerly, T. (2018) "Ordinary morality does not imply atheism," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 83: 85–96. doi:10.1007/s11153-016-9589-7
- Byrne, C. (2010) "Special religious education: The good, the bad and the ugly." Available at <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2010/11/01/3054122.htm> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Callahan, J. (1987) "On harming the dead." *Ethics* 97: 341–352.
- Calvin, J. (1960) *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. F. Battles. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.
- Campbell, S., and Nyholm, S. (2015) "Anti-meaning and why it matters." *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 1: 694–711.
- Camus, A. (1955) *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*. New York: Random House.
- Camus, A. (2012) *The Plague*. New York: Vintage.

- Camus, J-Y. (2013) "The European extreme right parties and their secular ideologies," in A. Mammone, E. Godin, and B. Jenkins (eds.) *Varieties of Right-Wing Extremism in Europe*. New York: Routledge, pp. 107–120.
- Caputo, J. (1997) *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Carnap, R. (1950) "Empiricism, semantics, and ontology." *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 4: 20–40.
- Carnap, R. (1956) *Meaning and Necessity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Carnap, R. (1959) *The Logical Syntax of Language*, trans. A. Smeaton. Paterson: Littlefield, Adams.
- Carnap, R. (1962) *Logical Foundations of Probability*, 2nd edn. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Carnap, R. (1967) *The Logical Structure of the World and Pseudo-problems in Philosophy*, trans. R. George. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Carrette, J. (2000) *Foucault and Religion: Spiritual Corporality and Political Spirituality*. London: Routledge.
- Case, A., and Deaton, A. (2015) "Rising morbidity and mortality in midlife among white non-Hispanic Americans in the twenty-first century." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 112: 15078–15083.
- Case, A., and Deaton, A. (2017) "Mortality and morbidity in the twenty-first century." Washington, DV: Brookins Institution.
- Cashmore, A. (2010) "The Lucretian swerve: The biological basis of human behavior and the criminal justice system." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 107: 4499–5004.
- Cavanaugh, W. (2009) *The Myth of Religious Violence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chalmers, D. (1996) *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Theory of Conscious Experience*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Chalmers, D. (2006) "Phenomenal concepts and the explanatory gap," in T. Alter and S. Walter (eds.) *Phenomenal Concepts and Phenomenal Knowledge: New Essays on Consciousness and Physicalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 167–194.
- Chalmers, D. (2009) "The two-dimensional argument against materialism," in B. McLaughlin, A. Beckermann, and S. Walter (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 313–335.
- Chen, Z., Qi, W., Hood, R. W., and Watson, P. J. (2011) "Common core thesis and qualitative and quantitative analysis of mysticism in Chinese Buddhist monks and nuns." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 50: 654–670.
- Chida, Y., Steptoe, A., and Powell, C. (2009) "Religiosity/spirituality and mortality" *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* 78: 81–90.
- Chidester, D. (1988) *Salvation and Suicide: An Interpretation of Jim Jones, the People's Temple and Jonestown*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Chignell, A. (2016) "The ethics of belief." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/ethics-belief/> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Chisholm, R. (1966) "Freedom and action," in K. Lehrer (ed.) *Freedom and Determinism*. New York: Random House.
- Chisholm, R. (1968) "The defeat of good and evil." *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 42: 21–38.
- Christensen, D. (2007) "Epistemology of disagreement: The good news." *Philosophical Review* 116: 187–217.
- Christensen, D. (2009) "Disagreement as evidence: The epistemology of controversy." *Philosophy Compass* 4: 756–767.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Christensen, D. (2010) "Higher-order evidence." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 81: 185–215.
- Christianet (2006) "Evangelicals are addicted to porn." Available at <http://christiannews.christianet.com/1154951956.htm> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Church, A. (1996) *Introduction to Mathematical Logic*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Church, A. (2009) "Referee reports on Fitch's 'A definition of value,'" in J. Salerno (ed.) *New Essays on the Knowability Paradox*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 13–20.
- Churchich, N. (1990) *Marxism and Alienation*. Cranbury: Associated University Press.
- Cicero, M. (1967) "The nature of the gods," trans. H. Rackham, in *Cicero in Twenty-eight Volumes*, Vol. 19. London: Heinemann, pp. 2–383.
- Cicero (2008) *On the Nature of the Gods*, trans. P. Walsh. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Claeys, G. (1989) *Thomas Paine, Social and Political Thought*. Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman.
- Clark, K., and Barrett, J. (2010) "Reformed epistemology and the cognitive science of religion." *Faith and Philosophy* 27: 174–189.
- Clarke, R. (2003) *Libertarian Accounts of Free Will*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Clarke, S. (1998) *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, and Other Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Clarke, S. (2012) "Coercion, consequence and salvation," in Y. Nagasawa (ed.) *Scientific Approaches to the Philosophy of Religion*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 205–223.
- Clarke, S. (2014) *The Justification of Religious Violence*. Malden: Wiley Blackwell.
- Clarke, S., Powell, R., and Savulescu, J. (eds.) (2013) *Religion, Intolerance and Conflict: A Scientific and Conceptual Investigation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Clavel, M. (1975) *Ce que je crois*. Paris: Grasset.
- Clifford, W. (1877) "The ethics of belief." *Contemporary Review* 29: 289–309. Reprinted in T. Madigan (ed.) *The Ethics of Belief and Other Essays* Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1999, pp. 70–96.
- Cloeren, H. (1987) "Marx on religion." *International Studies in Philosophy* 19: 1–20.
- Coady, C. (2008) *Morality and Political Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cohen, A. (2004) "What toleration is." *Ethics* 115: 68–95.
- Cohen, J. (1992) *An Essay on Belief and Acceptance*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Cohen, S. (1998) "Two kinds of sceptical argument." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 58: 143–159.
- Coliva, A. (2010) *Moore and Wittgenstein: Scepticism, Certainty, and Common Sense*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Coliva, A. (2015) *Extended Rationality: A Hinge Epistemology*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Colley, L. (1992) *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Colyvan, M. (2008) "Relative expectation theory." *Journal of Philosophy* 105: 37–44.
- Colyvan, M., and Hájek, A. (2016) "Making ado without expectations." *Mind*, 125: 829–857.
- Commission of the British Medical Association (1956) "Divine healing: B.M.A. evidence to Archbishops' committee." *British Journal of Medicine* 1(4975), May 12.
- Comte-Sponville, A. (2006) *The Little Book of Atheist Spirituality*, trans. N. Huston. New York: Viking.
- Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (2014) "Christ our light and life." Available at <http://www.ccdsydney.catholic.edu.au/currRes/overview.html> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Conway Morris, S. (2003) *Life's Solution: Inevitable Humans in a Lonely Universe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Copp, D. (1991) "Moral scepticism." *Philosophical Studies* 62: 203–233.
- Corak, M. (2013) "Income inequality, equality of opportunity, and intergenerational mobility." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 27: 79–102.
- Cosgrove, J. (2013) "What's it like: To get a rabies shot." Available at <http://newsok.com/article/3862071> (accessed 13 September 2018).

- Cottingham, J. (2003) *On the Meaning of Life*. London: Routledge.
- Cottingham, J. (2005) *The Spiritual Dimension: Religion, Philosophy and Human Value*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cottingham, J. (2016) "Meaningfulness, eternity, and theism," in J. Seachris and S. Goetz (eds.) *God and Meaning: New Essays*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, pp.123–136.
- Cottingham, J. (2016) "Theism and meaning in life." *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 8: 47–58.
- Cottingham, J., Stoothoff, R., Murdoch, D. (1984) *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Coyne, J. (2013) "Acceptance of evolution vs. religiosity in the US: Why evolution is true." Available at <https://whyevolutionistrue.wordpress.com/2013/04/07/acceptance-of-evolution-vs-religiosity-in-the-u-s> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Cragun, R., Kosmin, B., Keysar, A., Hammer, J. H., and Nielsen, M. (2012) "On the receiving end: Discrimination toward the non-religious in the United States." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 27: 105–127.
- Craig, W. (2008) *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd edn. Wheaton: Crossway Books.
- Craig, W. L. (2013) "The absurdity of life without God," in J. Seachris (ed.) *Exploring the Meaning of Life: An Anthology and Guide*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 153–172. Original lecture given 2008.
- Crane, T. (2013) *The Objects of Thought*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Crane, P. (1970) "On the origin of the phrase: 'Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu.'" *Journal of the History of Medicine* 25: 77–80.
- Crawford, K. (2012) "Education, ethics and religion: A case study." *Citizenship, Social and Economics Education* 11: 121–132.
- Cresswell, M. (2001) "Modal logic," in L. Goble (ed.) *The Blackwell Guide to Philosophical Logic*. Malden: Blackwell, pp. 136–158.
- Crosby, D. (2002) *A Religion of Nature*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Crosby, D. (2014) *More than Discourse: Symbolic Expressions of Naturalistic Faith*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Cuneo, T., and Shafer-Landau, R. (2014) "The moral fixed points: New directions for moral non-naturalism." *Philosophical Studies* 171: 399–443.
- Darnton, R. (1991) *Edition et Sédition: L'Univers de la Littérature Clandestine au XVIIIe Siècle*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Darnton, R. (1992) "Une spéculation sur l'irréligion: Le Système de la Nature du Baron de d'Holbach," in *Gens de Lettres: Gens du Livre*. Paris: Odile Jacob, pp. 220–244.
- Darwin, C. (1859) *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. London: John Murray.
- Darwin, C. (1871) *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*. London: John Murray.
- Davis, S. (2014) "On preferring that God not exist (or that God exist)." *Faith and Philosophy* 31: 143–159.
- Davison, J., Bourne, S., and Gordon, T. (1767) *De l'Imposture sacerdotale*, trans. P. d'Holbach, London & Amsterdam: M. M. Rey.
- Dawkins, R. (1983) "Universal Darwinism," in D. Bendall (ed.) *Evolution from Molecules to Men*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 403–425.
- Dawkins, R. (1986) *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe without Design*. London: W. W. Norton.
- Dawkins, R. (1989) "The evolution of evolvability," in C. Langton (ed.) *Artificial Life*. Redwood City: Addison-Wesley, pp. 201–220.
- Dawkins, R. (1995) *A River Out of Eden*. New York: Basic Books. (2nd edn 2008.)
- Dawkins, R. (1996) *Climbing Mount Improbable*. New York: W. W. Norton.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Dawkins, R. (1997) "Human chauvinism: Review of *Full House* by Stephen Jay Gould." *Evolution* 51: 1015–1020.
- Dawkins, R. (2001) "Religion's misguided missiles." *The Guardian*, 15 September.
- Dawkins, R. (2006) *The God Delusion*. London: Bantam Press.
- Dawkins, R., and Krebs, J. (1979) "Arms races between and within species." *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London B*, 205: 489–511.
- De Barruel, A. (1797–1798) *Mémoires pour Servir à l'Histoire du Jacobinisme*, 4 vols. London.
- De Barruel, A. (1816–1819) *Biographie Universelle Ancienne et Moderne: Histoire par Ordre Alphabétique de la vie Publique et Privée de tous les Hommes qui se sont faits Remarquer par leurs Actions ou leurs Écrits*. Paris: Michaud.
- De Beauvoir, S. (1972) *The Second Sex*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Decety, J., Cowell, J. M., Lee, K. et al. (2015) "The negative association between religiousness and children's altruism across the world." *Current Biology* 25: 1–5.
- De Cruz, H. (2016) "The naturalness of religious belief: Epistemological implications," in K. Clark (ed.) *The Blackwell Companion to Naturalism*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 481–493.
- De Cruz, H., and De Smedt, J. (2015) *A Natural History of Natural Theology: The Cognitive Science of Theology and Philosophy of Religion*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Degenhardt, L., Chiu, W., Sampson, N., Kessler, R., Anthony, J., Angermeyer, M., and Wells, J. (2008) "Toward a global view of alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, and cocaine use: Findings from the WHO World Mental Health Surveys." *PloS Medicine* 5: 1053–1067.
- Dehghani, M., Iliev, R., Sachdeva, S., Atran, S., Ginges, J. and Medin, D. (2009) "Emerging sacred values: Iran's nuclear program." *Judgment and Decision Making* 4: 930–933.
- Delamontagne, R. (2010) "High religiosity and societal dysfunction in the United States during the first decade of the twenty-first century." *Evolutionary Psychology* 8: 617–657.
- Dembski, W. (1999) *Intelligent Design: The Bridge Between Science and Theology*. Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press.
- Dembski, W. (2002) *No Free Lunch: Why Specified Complexity Cannot Be Purchased without Intelligence*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Dembski, W., and Ruse, M. (eds.) (2004) *Debating Design: Darwin to DNA*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Denzinger, H., and Schönmetzer, A. (1976) *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum*, 36th edn. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder.
- DeRose, K. (2000) Ought we to follow our evidence?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 60: 697–706.
- Derrida, J. (1993) "Circumfession," in G. Bennington and J. Derrida (eds.) *Jacques Derrida*, trans. G. Bennington. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Derrida, J. (1999) "Marx and sons," in M. Sprinker (ed.) *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's Spectres of Marx*. London: Verso.
- Derrida, J. (2001) *Writing and Difference*, trans A. Bass. London: Routledge.
- Derrida, J. (2005) *On Touching: Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. C. Irizarry. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Descartes, R. (1996) *Meditations on First Philosophy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Devitt, M. (1984) *Realism and Truth*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Devitt, M. (1994) "The methodology of naturalistic semantics." *Journal of Philosophy* 91: 545–572.
- Devitt, M. (2005) "Scientific realism," in F. Jackson and M. Smith (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 767–790.
- Dewey, J. (1938) *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Dewey, J. (1988) "Religion in our schools," in *The Collected Works of John Dewey: Middle Works 1925–1953*, Vol. 4, ed. J. Boydston. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

- Dewey, J. (2004) *Democracy and Education*. Mineola: Dover.
- Dickens, C. (1948) *Hard Times*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Diener, E., and Seligman, M. (2002) "Very happy people." *Psychological Science* 13: 81–84.
- Diller, J. (2016) "Global and local atheisms," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 79: 7–18.
- Dobson, J. (2007) "Does spanking work for all kids?." *Focus on the Family*. Available from <http://www.family.org/parenting/A000001547.cfm> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Dobson, J. (2007) "To spank or not to spank." *Focus on the Family*. Available from <http://www.family.org/parenting/A000001548.cfm> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Donald, M. (1991) *Origins of the Modern Mind: Three Stages in the Evolution of Culture and Cognition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Dougherty, T. (2016) "Belief that Life Has Meaning Confirms that Life Has Meaning," in J. Seachris and S. Goetz (eds.) *God and Meaning: New Essays*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 81–98.
- Dougherty, T., and Tweedt, C. (2015) "Religious epistemology." *Philosophy Compass* 10: 547–559.
- Dowell, J. (2004) "From metaphysical to substantive naturalism: A case study." *Synthese* 138: 149–173.
- Doyle, R. (2000) "The roots of homicide." *Scientific American* 283(3): 22.
- Doyle, R. (2002) "Quality of life." *Scientific American* 286(4): 32.
- Draper, P. (1989) "Pain and pleasure: An evidential problem for theists." *Noûs* 23: 331–350.
- Draper, P. (2005) "God, science, and naturalism," in W. Wainwright (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 272–303.
- Dubois, E. (ed.) (1981) *The Elizabeth Cady Stanton – Susan B. Anthony Reader* New York: Schocken Books. (2nd edn, Boston: Northeastern University Press 1992).
- Duhem, P. (1914) *The Aim and Structure of Physical Theory*, trans. P. Weiner. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Dummett, M. (1959) "Truth." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 59: 141–162.
- Dumsday, T. (2016) "Anti-theism and the problem of divine hiddenness." *Sophia* 55: 179–195.
- Dumsday, T. (2016) "Evidentially compelling religious experiences and the moral status of naturalism." *European Journal of Philosophy of Religion* 8: 123–144.
- Duncan, C. (2013) "Religion and secular utility: Happiness, truth, and pragmatic arguments for theistic belief." *Philosophy Compass* 8: 381–399.
- Dupré, J. (1981) "Natural kinds and biological taxa." *Philosophical Review* 90: 66–90.
- Dupré, J. and O'Malley, M. (2009) "Varieties of living things: Life at the intersection of lineage and metabolism." *Philosophy and Theory in Biology* 1(3). doi: 10.3998/ptb.6959004.0001.003
- Dworkin, R. (2006) *Justice in Robes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Dyer, J. (2000) *The Perpetual Prisoner Machine: How America Profits from Crime*. Boulder: Westover Press.
- Easwaran, K., Fenton-Glynn, L., Hitchcock, C., and Velasco, J. (2016) "Updating on the credences of others: Disagreement, agreement, and synergy." *Philosophers' Imprint* 16: 1–39.
- Easwaran, K. and Fitelson, B. (2015) "Accuracy, coherence, and evidence," in T. Szabo-Gendler and J. Hawthorne (eds.) *Oxford Studies in Epistemology*, Vol. 5. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 61–96.
- Eberle, C. (2002) *Religious Conviction in Liberal Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eberle, C., and Cuneo, T. (2015) *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. Available at <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/religion-politics/> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Ecklund, E., and Scheitle, C. (2007) "Religion among academic scientists: Distinctions, disciplines, and demographics." *Social Problems* 54: 289–307.
- Edelman, B. (2009) "Red light states: Who buys online adult entertainment?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 23: 209–220.

- Edgell, P., Gerteis, J., and Hartmann, D. (2006). "Atheists as 'Other': Moral boundaries and cultural membership in American society." *American Sociological Review* 71: 211–234.
- Edwards, P. (1957) "Appendix," in P. Edwards (ed.) *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*. New York: Simon & Schuster, pp. 207–259.
- Eliot, G. (1855) "Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft." *The Leader* 6: 988–989.
- Ellerton, P. (2010) "Theology is not philosophy," in W. Bonett (ed.) *The Australian Book of Atheism*. Melbourne: Scribe, pp. 125–138.
- Enoch, D. (2010) "The epistemological challenge to meta-normative realism: How best to understand it, and how to cope with it." *Philosophical Studies* 148: 413–438.
- Enoch, D. (2011) *Taking Morality Seriously: A Defence of Robust Realism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Evans, S. (2004) *Kierkegaard's Ethic of Love*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Evans, S. (2010) *Natural Signs and the Knowledge of God: A New Look at Theistic Arguments*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Evans, S. (2013) *God and Moral Obligation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Evans, S. (2015) "Moral arguments for theism and divine command theories of moral obligation," in C. Ruloff (ed.) *Christian Philosophy of Religion: Essays in Honour of Stephen Davis*. Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, pp. 258–272.
- Evans, S. (2016) "Moral arguments for the existence of God." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/moral-arguments-god/> (accessed 21 September 2018).
- Everitt, N. (2004) *The Non-Existence of God*. London: Routledge.
- Ezzati, M., Friedman, A., Kulkarni, S., and Murray, C. (2008) "The reversal of fortunes: Trends in county mortality and cross-country mortality disparities in the united states." *PLoS Medicine* 5: e66.
- Fales, E. (1996) "Scientific explanations of mystical experiences." *Religious Studies* 32: 297–313.
- Falkenstein, L. (2009) "Hume on 'genuine,' 'true,' and 'rational' religion." *Eighteenth-century thought* 4: 171–201.
- Fara, M., and Williamson, T. (2005) "Counterparts and actuality." *Mind* 114: 1–30.
- Feinberg, J. (1974) "The rights of animals and unborn generations," in W. Blackstone (ed.) *Philosophy and Environmental Crisis*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, pp. 43–68.
- Feinberg, J. (1977) "Harm and self-interest," in P. Hacker and J. Raz (eds.) *Law, Morality and Society: Essays in Honour of H. L. A. Hart*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Feinberg, J. (1980) "The child's right to an open future," in W. Aiken and H. LaFollette (eds.) *Whose Child? Rights, Parental Authority, and State Power*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 124–153.
- Feinberg, J. (1993) "Harm to others," in J. Fischer (ed.) *The Metaphysics of Death*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 169–190.
- Feldman, R. (2007) "Reasonable religious disagreements," in L. Anthony (ed.) *Philosophers Without Gods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 194–214.
- Feldman, R., and Conee, E. (1985) "Evidentialism." *Philosophical Studies* 48: 15–34.
- Feltz, A., Cokely, E., and Nadelhoffer, T. (2009) "Natural compatibilism versus natural incompatibilism: Back to the drawing board." *Mind and Language* 24: 1–23.
- Ferejohn, M. (2009) "Empiricism and the first principles of Aristotelian science," in G. Anagnostopoulos (ed.) *A Companion to Aristotle*. Oxford: Wiley, pp. 66–80.
- Feuerbach, L. (1881) *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. M. Evans. London: Trübnerand.
- Field, H. (1980) *Science without Numbers*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Field, H. (1994) "Deflationist views of meaning and content." *Mind* 103: 249–284.
- Field, H. (2008) *Saving Truth from Paradox*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Field, H. (2009) "Pluralism in Logic." *Review of Symbolic Logic* 2: 342–359.

- Fischer, J. (1994) *The Metaphysics of Free Will*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Fischer, J. (2006) *My Way: Essays on Moral Responsibility*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fisher, C. M. (2001) "If there were no free will." *Medical Hypotheses* 56: 364–366.
- Fitch, F. (1963) "A logical analysis of some value concepts." *Journal of Symbolic Logic* 28: 135–142.
- Fitzgerald, M. (1985) "Religion and feminism in Elizabeth Cady Stanton's life and thought." MA thesis, University of Wisconsin, Madison.
- Fitzgerald, M. (1993) "Foreword," in E. Stanton *The Woman's Bible*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, pp. vii–xxxiv.
- Flanagan, O. (2013) *The Bodhisattva's Brain: Buddhism Naturalized*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Fletcher, G. (ed.) (2016). *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Well-Being*. London: Routledge.
- Flew, A. Hare, R., and Mitchell, B. (1964) "Theology and falsification: a university discussion," in A. Flew and A. MacIntyre (eds.) *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*. New York: Macmillan, pp. 99–103.
- Foley, R. (2001) *Intellectual Trust in Oneself and Others*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Foot, P. (1961) "Goodness and choice." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 35 (Suppl.): 45–60.
- Foot, P. (1972) "Morality as a system of hypothetical imperatives." *Philosophical Review* 81: 305–316.
- Foot, P. (2001) *Natural Goodness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Foucault, M. (1966) "L'Homme est-il Morte?" in *Dits et Écrits, Vol. 1, 1954–1975*, Paris: Gallimard.
- Foucault, M. (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. M. Sheridan-Smith. New York: Pantheon.
- Frankfurt, H. (1982) "The importance of what we care about." *Synthese*, 53: 257–272.
- Fredkin, E. (2003) "An introduction to digital philosophy," *International Journal of Theoretical Physics* 42: 189–247.
- Freire, P. (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Freud, S. (1990) *The Future of an Illusion. Civilization, Society and Religion: Group Psychology, Civilization and Its Discontents and Other Works*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Freud, S. (1961) *The Future of an Illusion*, ed. J. Strachey, New York: Norton. Reprinted in *Civilisation, Society and Religions*, ed. A. Dickson, trans. J. Strachey. London: Penguin, 1991.
- Fricker, M. (2014) "Epistemic trust in oneself and others – an argument from analogy?" in L. Callahan and T. O'Connor (eds.) *Religious Faith and Intellectual Virtue*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 174–203.
- Fried, I., Mukamel, R., and Kreiman, G. (2011) "Internally generated pre-activation of single neurons in human medial frontal cortex predicts volition." *Neuron* 69: 548–562.
- Friedli, L. (2009) *Mental Health, Resilience and Inequalities: How Individuals and Communities are Affected*. World Health Organization. Available at http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/100821/E92227.pdf (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Gabbay, D. (1976) *Investigations in Modal and Tense Logics with Applications to Problems in Philosophy and Linguistics*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel.
- Gale, R. (1991) *On the Nature and Existence of God*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Galen of Pergamon (1985) "On the sects for beginners," in M. Frede (ed.) *Three Treatises on the Nature of Science*. Indianapolis: Hackett, pp. 3–20.
- Galen, L., and Kloet, J. (2011) "Mental well-being in the religious and non-religious: Evidence for a curvilinear relationship." *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* 14: 673–689.
- Gallup (2006) "Twenty-eight percent believe Bible is actual word of God." *Gallup Brain*. Available at <https://news.gallup.com/poll/22885/twentyeight-percent-believe-bible-actual-word-god.aspx> (accessed 22 October 2018).
- Gallup (2006) "Who believes in God and who doesn't?" *Gallup Brain*. Available at <https://news.gallup.com/poll/23470/who-believes-god-who-doesnt.aspx> (accessed 20 September 2018).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Gallup (2014) "In US, 42% believe creationist view of human origins." Available at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/170822/believe-creationist-view-human-origins.aspx> (accessed 18 September 2018).
- Gallup (2014) "Mississippi most religious state, Vermont least religious." Available at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/167267/mississippi-religious-vermont-least-religious-state.aspx>
- Garrett, D. (2012) "What's true about Hume's 'true religion'?" *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 10(2): 199–220.
- Garson, J. (1984) "Quantification in modal logic," in D. Gabbay and F. Guenther (eds.) *Handbook of Philosophical Logic*, Vol. 2, AA. Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 249–307.
- Garson, J. (1991) "Applications of free logic to quantified intensional logic," in K. Lambert (ed.) *Philosophical Application of Free Logic*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 111–142.
- Garvey, B. (2010) "Absence of evidence, evidence of absence, and the atheist's teapot." *Ars Disputandi* 10: 9–22.
- Gauchet, M. (1999) *The Disenchantment of the World*, trans O. Burge. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Gauss, G. (1996) *Justificatory Liberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gauss, G. (2011) *The Order of Public Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gaylor, A. (2012) *Women Without Superstition: Writings of Woman Free Thinkers of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, 2nd edn. Madison: Freedom from Religion Foundation.
- Gazzaniga, M. (2011) *Who's in Charge? Free Will and the Science of the Brain*. New York: Ecco; paperback edn., New York: HarperCollins, 2012.
- Geach, P. (1956) "Good and evil." *Analysis* 17: 33–42.
- Geach, P. (1973) "Omnipotence." *Philosophy* 48: 7–20.
- Gellmann, J. (1992) "A new look at the problem of evil." *Faith and Philosophy* 9: 210–216.
- Gellman, J. (1997) *Experience of God and the Rationality of Religious Belief*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Gensler, H. (2016) *Ethics and Religion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Geoghegan, T. (2010) *Were you Born on the Wrong Continent?* New York: New Press.
- Geoghegan, V. (2004) "Religion and communism: Feuerbach, Marx and Bloch." *The European Legacy* 9: 585–595.
- George, A. (2016) *The Everlasting Check: Hume on Miracles*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Geroulanos, S. (2010) *An Atheism that Is Not Humanist Emerges in French Thought*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Gervais, W., and Norenzayan, A. (2013) "Religion and the origins of anti-atheist prejudice," in S. Clarke, R. Powell, and J. Savulescu (eds.) *Religion, Intolerance and Conflict: A Scientific and Conceptual Investigation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 126–145.
- Gervais, W., Shariff, A., and Norenzayan, A. (2011) "Do you believe in atheists? Distrust is central to anti-atheist prejudice." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101: 1189–1206.
- Gibbard, A. (2011) "How much realism? Evolved thinkers and normative concepts," in R. Shafer-Landau (ed.) *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, Vol. 6. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 33–51.
- Giere, R. (1999) *Science without Laws*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gill, A., and Lundsgaarde, E. (2004) "State welfare spending and religiosity." *Rationality and Society* 16: 399–436.
- Gilmore, L. (2010) *Theatre in a Crowded Fire: Ritual and Spirituality at Burning Man*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ginet, C. (2007) "An action can be both uncaused and up to the agent," in C. Lumer and S. Nannini (eds.) *Intentionality, Deliberation, and Autonomy*. Burlington: Ashgate, pp. 243–255.
- Ginges, J., Atran, S., Medin, D. and Shihaki, K. (2007) "Sacred bounds on rational resolution of conflict." *PNAS*, 104: 7357–7360.

- Givens, T. (2015) *Wrestling the Angel: Foundations of Mormon Thought*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Godwin, W. (1798) *Memoirs of the Author of "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman,"* 2nd edn. London: J. Johnson.
- Goetz, S. (2008) *Freedom, Teleology, and Evil*. New York: Continuum.
- Goetz, S. (2012) *The Purpose of Life: A Theistic Perspective*. New York: Continuum.
- Goetz, S., and Taliaferro, C. (2008) *Naturalism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Goldman, A. (1978) "Epistemics: The regulative theory of cognition." *Journal of Philosophy* 75: 509–523.
- Goldman, A. (1979) "What is justified belief?," in G. Pappas (ed.) *Justification and Knowledge*. Dordrecht: Reidel, pp. 1–24.
- Gordon, A. (ed.) (2003) *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, Vols. 1 and 3. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Gordon, A. (ed.) (2013) *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, Vol. 4. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Gordon, J. (1983) "Is the existence of God relevant to the meaning of life?" *Modern Schoolman* 60 (4): 227–246. Reprinted in J. Seachris (ed.) *Exploring the Meaning of Life: An Anthology and Guide* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, pp. 138–152.
- Gorham, G. (2013) "The theological foundation of Hobbesian physics: A defense of a corporeal God." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 21: 240–261.
- Gornick, V. (2005) *The Solitude of Self: Thinking about Elizabeth Cady Stanton*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- Gould, S. (1985) "SETI and the wisdom of Casey Stengel," in *The Flamingo's Smile*. New York: Norton, pp. 403–413.
- Grandy, R. (2002) "Many-valued, free, and intuitionistic logics," in D. Jacquette (ed.) *A Companion to Philosophical Logic*. Malden: Blackwell, pp. 531–544.
- Grasmick, H., Davenport, G., Chamblin, M., and Bursick, R. (1992) "Protestant fundamentalism and the retributive doctrine of punishment." *Criminology* 30: 21–45.
- Gray, A. (1876) *Darwiniana*. New York: D. Appleton.
- Grayling, A. (1996) *Russell*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Greenberg, J., Pyszczynski, T., Solomon, S., Rosenblatt, A., Veeder, M., Kirkland, S., and Lyon, D. (1990) "Evidence for terror management theory II: The effects of mortality salience on reactions to those who threaten or bolster the cultural worldview." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 58: 308–318.
- Greenberg, J., Solomon, S., Pyszczynski, T., Rosenblatt, A., Burling, J., Lyon, D., and Simon, L. (1992) "Assessing the terror management analysis of self-esteem: Converging evidence of an anxiety-buffering function." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 63: 913–922.
- Greenberg, J., Solomon, S., and Pyszczynski, T. (1997) "Terror management theory of self-esteem and cultural worldviews: Empirical assessments and conceptual refinements," in M. Zanna (ed.) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 29. Orlando, FL: Academic Press, pp. 61–139.
- Griffin, J. (2002) *Well-Being: Its Meaning, Measurement and Moral Importance*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Griffin, N. (1995) "Bertrand Russell as a critic of religion." *Studies in Religion* 24: 47–58.
- Griffiths, R. R., Richards, W. A., McCann, U., and Jesse, R. (2006) "Psilocybin can occasion mystical-type experiences having substantial and sustained personal meaning and spiritual significance." *Psychopharmacology* 187, 268–283.
- Gross, N., and Simmons, S. (2009) "The religiosity of American college and university professors." *Sociology of Religion* 70: 101–129.
- Grover, D. (1989) "Posthumous harm." *Philosophical Quarterly* 39: 334–353.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Gruber, J., and Hungerman, D. (2006) "The church vs. the mall: What happens when religion faces increased secular competition?" *National Bureau of Economic Research*. Available at <http://papers.nber.org/papers/w12410.pdf> (accessed 22 October 2018).
- Gutmann, A. (1999) *Democratic Education*, rev. edn. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Gutmann, A., and Thompson, D. (2004) *Why Deliberative Democracy?* Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Habermas, J. (1998) *Between Facts and Norms*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Habermas, J. (2006) "Religion in the public sphere." *European Journal of Philosophy* 14: 1–25.
- Hackett, J., Sengupta, R., Zyllicz, J., et al. (2013) "Germline demethylation dynamics and imprint erasure through 5-hydroxymethylcytosine." *Science* 339: 448–452.
- Hacking, I. (1965) *The Logic of Statistical Inference*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hacking, I. (1984) "Experimentation and scientific realism," in J. Leplin (ed.) *Scientific Realism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 154–172.
- Hackney, C., and Sanders, G. (2003) "Religiosity and mental health: A meta-analysis of recent studies." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42: 43–55.
- Häggglund, M. (2008) *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Häggglund, M. (2014) "Derrida's radical atheism: Derrida and the time of life," in Z. Diarek and L. Lawlor (eds.) *Companion to Derrida*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 166–178.
- Hahn, H., Neurath, O., and Carnap, R. (1973) "The scientific conception of the world," trans P. Foulkes and M. Neurath, in M. Neurath and R. Cohen (eds.) *Empiricism and Sociology* Boston: Reidel, pp. 299–318.
- Haidt, J. (2012) *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion*. New York: Pantheon/Knopf.
- Haidt, J., Koller S., and Dias, M. (1993) "Affect, culture and morality: Is it wrong to eat your dog?" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 65, 613–628.
- Hájek, A. (2003) "Waging War on Pascal's wager." *Philosophical Review* 112: 27–56.
- Hájek, A. (2012) "Pascal's wager." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pascal-wager/> (accessed 22 October 2018).
- Hale, B. (2013) *Necessary Beings: An Essay on Ontology, Modality, and the Relations Between Them*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hall, D., Matz, D., and Wood, W. (2010) "Why don't we practice what we preach? A meta-analytic review of religious racism." *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 14: 126–139.
- Hand, M. (2003) "A philosophical objection to faith schools." *Theory and Research in Education* 1: 89–99.
- Hand, M. (2006) *Is Religious Education Possible? A Philosophical Investigation*. London: Continuum.
- Hardy, T. (1994) *Collected Poems*. Ware: Wordsworth Poetry Library.
- Hare, J. (1996) *The Moral Gap*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hare, J. (2015) *God's Command*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harman, G. (1965) "The inference to the best explanation." *Philosophical Review* 74: 88–95.
- Harris, S. (2006) *Letter to a Christian Nation*. New York: Knopf.
- Harris, S. (2010) *The Moral Landscape: How Science can Determine Human Values*. New York: Free Press, >27>
- Harris, S. (2014) *Waking Up*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Harrison, P. (1999) *Pantheism: Understanding the Divinity in Nature and the Universe*. Boston: Element Books.
- Hart, W., and McGinn, C. (1976) "Knowledge and necessity." *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 5: 205–208.
- Hartmann, W. (2015) "Chelyabinsk, Zond IV, and a possible first-century fireball of historical importance." *Meteoritics and Planetary Science* 50: 368–381.

- Hartshorne, C. (1984) "God and the meaning of life," in L. Rouner (ed.) *Boston University Studies in Philosophy and Religion*, Vol. 6: *On Nature*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, pp. 154–168.
- Harvie, T. (2011) "God as a field of force: Personhood and science in Wolfhart Pannenberg's pneumatology." *Heythrop Journal* 52: 250–259.
- Hasker, W. (1992) "The necessity of gratuitous evil." *Faith and Philosophy* 9: 23–44.
- Hasker, W. (2010) "Defining 'Gratuitous evil': A response to Alan R. Rhoda." *Religious Studies* 46: 303–309.
- Hastings, J. (2009) *Catholicism and the Roots of Nazism: Religious Identity and National Socialism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hauerwas, S. (1984) *Should War be Eliminated: Philosophical and Theological Investigations*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press.
- Hawking, S., and Penrose, R. (1970) "The singularities of gravitational collapse and cosmology." *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London, Series A, Mathematical and Physical Sciences* 314: 529–548.
- Hayaki, R. (2006) "Contingent objects and the Barcan formula." *Erkenntnis* 64: 75–83.
- Heathcote, A. (1990) "Unbounded operators and the incompleteness of quantum mechanics." *Philosophy of Science* 57: 523–534.
- Hegel, G. (2010) *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline, Part 1, Science and Logic*, ed. K. Brinkmann and D. Dahlstrom. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heidegger, M. (1969) "The onto-theo-logical constitution of metaphysics," trans. J. Stambaugh, in *Identity and Difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Heidegger, M. (1977) "The word of Nietzsche: God is dead," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. W. Lovitt. New York: Harper Torchbooks, pp. 53–112.
- Helliwell, J., Layard, R., and Sachs, J. (2017) *World Happiness Report 2017*. New York: Sustainable Development Solutions Network.
- Hellman, G. (1993) "Constructive mathematics and quantum mechanics: Unbounded operators and the Spectral Theorem." *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 22: 221–248.
- Hellman, G. (1993) "Gleason's Theorem is not constructively provable." *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 22: 193–203.
- Hellman, G. (1997) "Quantum mechanical unbounded operators and constructive mathematics: A rejoinder to Bridges." *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 26: 121–127.
- Hellman, G. (1998) "Mathematical constructivism in spacetime." *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 49: 425–450.
- Hempel, C. (1965) "Problems and changes in the empiricist criterion of meaning," in *Aspects of Scientific Explanation and Other Essays*. New York: Free Press, pp. 101–122. Revised version of an original work published 1950 in *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 11: 41–63.
- Hempel, C. (1965) "Studies in the logic of confirmation," in *Aspects of Scientific Explanation and Other Essays*. New York: Free Press, pp. 3–46.
- Henrich, J. (2009) "The evolution of costly displays, cooperation and religion: Credibility enhancing displays and their implications for cultural evolution." *Evolution and Human Behaviour* 30: 244–260.
- Henry, N., and Kurzak, K. (2012) "Religion in Australia." Available at <http://www.australiancollaboration.com.au/pdf/FactSheets/Religion-FactSheet.pdf> (accessed 24 September 2018).
- Herbrand, J. (1971) "Investigations in proof theory," trans. B. Dreben, W. Goldfarb, and J. van Heijenoort, in *Logical Writings*, ed. W. Goldfarb. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 44–202.
- Hewstone, M., Rubin, M., and Willis, H. (2002) "Intergroup bias." *Annual Review of Psychology* 53: 575–604.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Hick, J. (1966) *Evil and the God of Love*. London: Macmillan.
- Hick, J. (1966) *Faith and Knowledge*, 2nd edn. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Hill, C. (1997) "Imaginability, conceivability, possibility, and the mind-body problem." *Philosophical Studies* 87: 61–85.
- Himmelstein, D., Warren, E., Thorne, D., and Wollhandler, S. (2005) "Illness and injury as contributors to bankruptcy." *Health Affairs*. Available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15689369> (accessed 24 September 2018).
- Hodges, W. (2001) "Classical logic I – First-order logic," in L. Goble (ed.) *Blackwell Guide to Philosophical Logic*. Malden: Blackwell, pp. 9–32.
- Hoffman, J., and Rosenkrantz, G. (2010) "Omnipotence," in C. Taliaferro, P. Draper, and P. Quinn (eds.) *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 243–250.
- Holbach (1970) *The System of Nature*, trans. H. Robinson. New York: Burt Franklin.
- Holbach, P. (1979) *Catalogue de Tableaux des Trois Écoles (1789); Éléments de la Morale Universelle ou Catéchisme de la Nature (1790)*. Genève: Slatkine reprints.
- Holbach, P. (1900) *Good Sense in Nature*. London: W. Stewart & Co.
- Holbach, P. (2008) *Le bon sens puisé dans la Nature*. Paris: Coda.
- Holden, T. (2010) *Spectres of False Divinity: Hume's Moral Atheism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hölderlin, F. (2008) *Odes and Elegies*, ed. and trans. N. Hoff. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.
- Hood, R., Bernard, S., Hunsberger, B., and Gorsuch, R. (1986) *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Hook, S. (1962) *From Hegel to Mark: Studies in the Intellectual Development of Karl Marx*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Hooker, B. (2008) "The meaning of life: Subjectivism, objectivism, and divine support," in N. Athanassoulis and S. Vice (eds.) *The Moral Life: Essays in Honour of John Cottingham*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 184–200.
- Horwich, P. (1990) *Truth*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hovland, N. (2016) *Thomas Jefferson's Religion*. Morrisville: Lulu Press.
- Howard-Snyder, D. (1996) *The Evidential Argument from Evil*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Howard-Snyder, D. (2014) "Agnosticism, the moral scepticism objection, and commonsense morality," in T. Dougherty and J. McBrayer (eds.) *Sceptical Theism: New Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 293–306.
- Howson, C. (2011) *Objecting to God*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hoyningen-Huene, P. (2013) *Systematicity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hrdy, S. (1991) *Mother Nature*. New York: Ballantine.
- Hubin, D. C. (2009) "Empty and ultimately meaningless gestures?" in R. Garcia and N. King (eds.) *Is Goodness without God Good Enough? A Debate on Faith, Secularism, and Ethics*. New York: Roman & Littlefield, pp. 131–150.
- Huemer, M. (2001) *Skepticism and the Veil of Perception*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Huemer, M. (2005) *Ethical intuitionism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Huemer, M. (2016) "A liberal realist answer to debunking sceptics: The empirical case for realism." *Philosophical Studies* 173: 1983–2010.
- Hughes, G., and Cresswell, M. (1996) *A New Introduction to Modal Logic*. New York: Routledge.
- Hume, D. (1947) *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. N. Kemp Smith. London: Thomas Nelson.
- Hume, D. (1975) *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. Selby-Bigge and P. Nidditch, 3rd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hume, D. (1976) *The Natural History of Religion*, ed. W. Colver. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

- Hume, D. (1978) *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. Selby-Bigge and P. Nidditch, 2nd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hume, D. (1987) *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. E. Miller, rev. edn. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund.
- Hume, D. (1980) *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. R. Popkin. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Hume, D. (1990) *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. M. Bell. London: Penguin.
- Hume, D. (2000) *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hume, D. (2007) *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. D. Coleman, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hume, D. (2007) *A Dissertation on the Passions and The Natural History of Religion*, ed. T. Beauchamp. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hume, D. (2011) *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Hollywood, FL: Simon & Brown.
- Inzlicht, M., McGregor, I., Hirsh, J., and Nash, K. (2009) "Neural markers of religious conviction." *Psychological Science* 20: 385–392.
- Ipsos (2011) "Supreme being, the afterlife and evolution." Available at <https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/news-polls/ipsos-global-dvisory-supreme-beings-afterlife-and-evolution> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Irvine, W. (2009) *A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- ISSP (2001) "Religion II," International Social Survey Program. Current dataset, doi: 10.4232/1.3680. Available at <https://dbk.gesis.org/dbksearch/sdesc2.asp?no=3190&search=1998%20issp&search2=&field=all&field2=DB&e&tab=0¬abs=&nf=1&af=&ll=10> (accessed 25 September 2018).
- Jackson, F. (1998) *From Metaphysics to Ethics: A Defence of Conceptual Analysis*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Jamal, A., and Tessler, M. (2008) "The democracy barometers: Attitudes in the Arab world." *Journal of Democracy* 19: 97–110.
- Jamal, A., Tessler, M., and Robbins, M. (2012) "New findings on Arabs and democracy." *Journal of Democracy* 23: 89–103.
- James, W. (1896) "The will to believe." *The New World: A Quarterly Review of Religion, Ethics and Theology* 5: 327–337. Reprinted in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*. New York: Dover, 1956.
- James, W. (1907) *Pragmatism*. New York: Longmans, Green & Co.
- James, W. (1909) *The Meaning of Truth*. New York: Longmans, Green & Co.
- James, W. (1912) *Essays in Radical Empiricism*. New York: Longmans, Green & Co.
- James, W. (1985) *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, ed. M. Marty. London: Penguin.
- Jauch, J. (1968) *Foundations of Quantum Mechanics*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.
- Jenkins, S. (2010) "Making merit through warfare according to the Ārya-Bodhisattva-gocara-upāyavisaya-vikurvana-nirdēsa Sūtra," in M. Jerryson and M. Juergensmeyer (eds.) *Buddhist Warfare*. New York: Oxford University Press, 59–75.
- Jensen, G. (2006) "Religious cosmologies and homicide rates among nations: A closer look." *Journal of Religion and Society* 8: 1–14.
- John Paul II (1998) *Fides et Ratio: Encyclical Letter of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Relationship between Faith and Reason*. Strathfield, NSW: St Paul's Publications.
- Johnson, B., Tompkins, R., and Webb, D. (2002) "Objective hope: Assessing the effectiveness of faith-based organizations: A review of the literature." *Manhattan Institute for Policy Research*. Available at http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/crrucs-obj_hope.htm (accessed 24 September 2018).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Johnson, D. (2016) *God is Watching You: How the Fear of God Made Us Human*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Johnson, D., and Reeve, Z. (2013) "The virtues of intolerance: Is religion an adaptation for war?" in S. Clarke, R. Powell, and J. Savulescu (eds.) *Religion, Intolerance and Conflict: A Scientific and Conceptual Investigation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 67–87.
- Johnson, M. (2005) *Aristotle on Teleology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Johnson, P. (1991) *Darwin on Trial*. Washington: Regnery Gateway.
- Johnston, M. (2011) *Saving God: Religion after Idolatry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jones, J. (2007) "Some Americans reluctant to vote for Mormon, 72-year-old presidential candidates." *Gallup News Service*, 20 February 2007. Available at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/26611/some-americans-reluctant-vote-mormon-72yearold-presidential-candidates.aspx> (accessed 7 September 2018).
- Jordan, J. (ed.) (1994) *Gambling on God: Essays on Pascal's Wager*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Jordan, J. (2004) "Divine love and human suffering." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 56: 169–178.
- Jordan, J. (2006) *Pascal's wager: Pragmatic arguments and belief in God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jordan, J. (2013) "Pragmatic arguments and belief in God." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pragmatic-belief-god/> (accessed 22 October 2018).
- Josephson, J., and Josephson, S. (1994) *Abductive Inference: Computation, Philosophy, Technology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Joyce, R. (2006) *The Evolution of Morality*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Joyce, R. (2013) "Ethics and evolution," in H. LaFollette and I. Persson (eds.) *Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory*, 2nd edn. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 123–147.
- Joyce, R. (2016) *Essays in Moral Scepticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Juergensmeyer, M. (2003) *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 3rd edn. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kagan, S. (1998) *Normative Ethics*. Boulder: Westview.
- Kahane, G. (2011) "Evolutionary debunking arguments." *Noûs* 45: 103–125.
- Kahane, G. (2011) "Should we want God to exist?." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 82: 674–696.
- Kahane, G. (2012) "The value question in metaphysics." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 85: 27–55.
- Kahane, G. (2014) "Our cosmic insignificance." *Noûs* 48: 745–772.
- Kahane, G. (2017) "If nothing matters." *Noûs* 51: 327–353.
- Kahane, G. (2017) "If there is a hole it is not God-shaped," in K. Kraay (ed.) *Does God Matter? Essays on the Axiological Implications of Theism*. London: Routledge.
- Kahneman, D., Diener, E., and Schwarz, N. (eds.) (1999) *Well-being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Kane, R. (1996) *The Significance of Free Will*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kant, I. (1952) *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. Meredith. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kant, I. (1964) *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. H. Paton. New York: Harper & Row.
- Kant, I. (2000) *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. P. Guyer, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kapstein, M. (2016) "The Buddhist refusal of theism." *Diogenes* 52: 61–65.
- Kaufman, G. (2000) *In the Beginning... Creativity*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Kaufmann, W. (1971) *Cain and Other Poems*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Kawachi, I., and Kennedy, B. (2002) *The Health of Nations: Why Inequality is Harmful to your Health*. New York: New Press.

- Kienzler, W. (2006) "Wittgenstein and John Henry Newman on certainty." *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 71: 117–138.
- Keister, L. (2008) "Conservative Protestants and wealth: How religion perpetuates asset poverty." *American Journal of Sociology* 113: 1237–1271.
- Kekes, J. (2000) "The meaning of life," in P. French and H. Wettstein (eds.) *Midwest Studies in Philosophy, Vol. 24, Life and Death*. Malden: Blackwell, pp. 17–34.
- Kekes, J. (2010) *The Human Condition*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kelly, T. (2002) "The rationality of belief and other propositional attitudes." *Philosophical Studies* 110: 163–196.
- Kelly, T. (2011) "*Consensus gentium*: Reflections on the common consent argument for the existence of God," in K. Clark and R. VanArragon (eds.) *Evidence and Religious Belief*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 135–156.
- Kern, K. (2002) *Mrs. Stanton's Bible*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Kienzler, W. (2006) "Wittgenstein and John Henry Newman on certainty." *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 71: 117–138.
- Kierkegaard, S. (1985) *Fear and Trembling*, trans. with an introduction by A. Hannay. London: Penguin.
- Kim, M. (2008) "Spiritual values, religious practices and democratic attitudes." *Politics and Religion* 1: 216–236.
- Kimball, C. (2008) *When Religion Becomes Evil: Five Warning Signs*. New York: HarperCollins.
- King, J. (2002) "Designating propositions." *Philosophical Review* 111: 341–371.
- Kirkpatrick, C. (1949) *Religion and humanitarianism: A study of institutional implications*. Psychological Monographs, 63/304. Washington: American Psychological Association.
- Kitcher, P. (1982) *Abusing Science: The Case Against Creationism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Kitcher, P. (1995) *The Advancement of Science: Science without Legend, Objectivity without Illusions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kitcher, P. (2006) "Biology and ethics," in D. Copp (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 163–185.
- Kitcher, P. (2011) *The Ethical Project*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kiteley, M. (1958) Existence and the ontological argument." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 18: 533–535.
- Knight, S. (2010) "NSW ethics course trial final report." Sydney: NSW Department of Education and Training.
- Koch, C. (2012) *Consciousness: Confessions of a Romantic Reductionist*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Koenig, H., McCullough, M., and Larson, D. (eds.) (2012) *Handbook of Religion and Health*, 2nd edn. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kohl, M. (1987) "Russell on the utility of religion: Copleston's critique." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 22: 69–79.
- Komlos, J., and Lauderdale, B. (2007) "Underperformance in affluence: The remarkable relative decline in US heights in the second half of the 20th century." *Social Science Quarterly* 88: 283–305.
- Kornblith, H. (1980) "Beyond foundationalism and the coherence theory." *Journal of Philosophy* 77: 597–612.
- Kornblith, H. (1983) "Doxastic agency." *Philosophical Studies* 43: 355–364.
- Kors, C. (1976) *D'Holbach's coterie: An Enlightenment in Paris*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kors, C. (1976) "The myth of the Coterie Holbachique." *French Historical Studies* 9: 573–595.
- Korsgaard, C. (1996) *The Sources of Normativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kraay, K., and Dragos, C. (2013) "On preferring God's non-existence." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 43: 157–178.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Krauss, L. (2012) *A Universe from Nothing*. New York: Free Press.
- Kripke, S. (1971) "Semantical considerations on modal logic," in L. Linsky (ed.) *Reference and Modality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 63–72.
- Krucoff, M., Crater, S., Gallup, D., et al. (2005) "Music, imagery, touch, and prayer as adjuncts to interventional cardiac care: The monitoring and actualisation of noetic trainings (MANTRA) II randomised studystudy." *Lancet* 366: 211–217.
- Kvanvig, J. (2006) *The Knowability Paradox*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kwan, K. (2006) "Can religious experience provide justification for the belief in God? The debate in contemporary analytic philosophy." *Philosophy Compass* 1: 640–661.
- Laborde, C. (2012) "State paternalism and religious dress code," *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 10: 398–410.
- Lackey, J. (2010) "What should we do when we disagree," in T. Gendler and J. Hawthorne (eds.) *Oxford Studies in Epistemology*, Vol. 3. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 274–293.
- Lafont, C. (2007) "Religion in the public sphere: remarks on Habermas' conception of public deliberation in post-secular societies." *Constellations* 14: 239–259.
- Lafont, C. (2014) "Religious pluralism in a deliberative democracy," in F. Requejo and C. Ungureanu (eds.) *Secular or Post-Secular Democracies in Europe? The Challenge of Religious Pluralism in the Twenty-First Century* London: Routledge, pp. 46–60.
- Lafont, C. (2017) "Citizens in robes: The place of religion in constitutional democracies." *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 43: 453–464.
- Lakatos, I. (1970) "Falsification and the methodology of scientific research programmes," in I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave (eds.) *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge: Proceedings of the International Colloquium in the Philosophy of Science, London, 1965*, Vol. 4. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 91–196.
- Lambert, K. (2001) "Comments," in E. Morscher and A. Hieke (eds.) *New Essays in Free Logic: In Honour of Karel Lambert*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, pp. 239–252.
- Lambert, K. (2001) "Free logics," in L. Goble (ed.) *Blackwell Guide to Philosophical Logic*. Malden: Blackwell, pp. 258–279.
- Larmore, C. (1987) *Patterns of Moral Complexity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Laurence K. (2012) *A Universe from Nothing*. New York: Free Press.
- Laudan, L. (1981) "A confutation of convergent realism." *Philosophy of Science* 48: 19–49.
- Law, S. (2006) *The War for Children's Minds*. London: Routledge.
- Law, S. (2009) "Religion and philosophy in schools," in M. Hand and C. Winstanley (eds.) *Philosophy in Schools*. London: Continuum, pp. 41–57.
- LeBlanc, H., and Thomason, R. (1968) "Completeness theorems for some presupposition-free logics." *Fundamenta Mathematicae* 62: 125–164.
- LeDrew, S. (2016) *The Evolution of Atheism: The Politics of a Modern Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Leftow, B. (2011) "Why perfect being theology?" *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 69: 103–118.
- Leibniz, G. (1765/1916) *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, trans. A. Langley, 2nd edn. Chicago: Open Court.
- Lemmens, W. (2010) "Beyond the calm sunshine of the mind: Hume on morality and religion." *Tijdschrift Voor Filosofie* 72 (3): 423–460.
- Le Poidevin, R. (2010) *Agnosticism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leslie, J. (1989) *Universes*. New York: Routledge.
- Levenbook, B. (1984) "Harming someone after his deathdeath." *Ethics* 94: 407–419.
- Levine, J. (1983) "Materialism and qualiaqualia: The explanatory gapgap." *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 64: 354–361.
- Levinson, M. (1999) *The Demands of Liberal Education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Lewis, D. (1986) *On the Plurality of Worlds*. Malden: Blackwell.
- Lewis, D. (1993) "Evil for freedom's sake?" *Philosophical Papers* 22: 149–172.
- Libet, B. (1985) "Unconscious cerebral initiative and the role of conscious will in voluntary action." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 8: 529–566.
- Libet, B. (1999) "Do we have free will?" *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 6: 47–57.
- Libet, B. (2004) *Mind Time*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Libet, B., Wright, E., and Gleason, C. (1982) "Readiness potentials preceding unrestricted 'spontaneous' vs. pre-planned voluntary acts." *Electroencephalography and Clinical Neurophysiology* 54: 322–335.
- Linford, D., and Megill, J. (2018) "Cognitive bias, the axiological question, and the epistemic probability of theistic belief," in M. Szatkowski (ed.) *Ontology of Theistic Beliefs: Meta-Ontological Perspectives*. Berlin: de Gruyter, pp. 77–92.
- Linsky, B., and Zalta, E. (1994) "In defense of the simplest quantified modal logic." *Philosophical Perspectives*, Vol. 8, *Logic and Language*, pp. 431–458.
- Linsky, B., and Zalta, E. (1996) "In defense of the contingently nonconcrete." *Philosophical Studies* 84: 283–294.
- Linville, M. (2009) "The moral argument," in W. Craig and J. Moreland (eds.) *Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 391–448.
- Lipman, M. (2003) *Thinking in Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lipton, P. (2001) "Is explanation a guide to inference? A reply to Wesley C. Salmon," in G. Hon and S. Rakover (eds.) *Explanation: Theoretical Approaches and Applications*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, pp. 93–120.
- Lipton, P. (2004) *Inference to the Best Explanation*. New York: Routledge.
- Lobkowicz, N. (1964) "Karl Marx's attitude towards religion," *Review of Politics* 26: 319–352.
- Locke, J. (1975) *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P. Nidditch. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Locke, J. (1997) *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. R. Woolhouse. London: Penguin.
- Loeb, L. (1981) *From Descartes to Hume: Continental Metaphysics and the Development of Modern Philosophy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Loewer, B. (1997) "A guide to naturalizing semantics," in C. Wright and B. Hale (eds.) *A Companion to the Philosophy of Language*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 108–126.
- Loewer, B. (2012) "Two accounts of laws and time." *Philosophical Studies* 160: 115–137.
- Lokhorst, G.-J. (2006) "Andersonian deontic logic, propositional quantification, and Mally." *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic* 47: 385–395.
- Lotringer, S. (ed.) (1996) *Foucault Live (Interviews, 1961–1984)*, 2nd edn. New York: Semiotext(e).
- Lovejoy, A. (1908) "The thirteen pragmatisms." *Journal of Philosophy* 5: 5–15.
- Lovering, R. (2011) "Does ordinary morality imply atheism? A reply to Maitzen." *Forum Philosophicum* 16: 83–98.
- Luck, M., and Ellerby, N. (2012) "Should we want God not to exist?" *Philo* 15: 193–199.
- Lucretius (1950) *Of the Nature of Things*, trans. W. Leonard. Everyman's Library, London: Dutton.
- Luhrmann, T. (2012) *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*. New York: Vintage.
- Luper, S. (2004) "Posthumous harm." *Philosophical Quarterly* 41: 63–72.
- Luper, S. (2014) "Death," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/death/> (accessed 22 October 2018).
- Lycan, W. (1988) *Judgement and Justification*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lycan, W. (1996) *Consciousness and Experience*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Lynch, M. (2009) *Truth as One and Many*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Macedo, S. (1990) "The politics of justification." *Political Theory* 18: 280–304.
- Macey, D. (2004) *Michel Foucault*. London: Reaktion.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Mackie, J. (1955) "Evil and omnipotence." *Mind* 64: 200–212.
- Mackie, J. (1977) *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. New York: Penguin.
- Maddock, K. (1974) *The Australian Aboriginals: A Portrait of their Society*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Maimonides, M. (1996) *The Eight Chapters of Maimonides on Ethics (Semonah Perakim)*, ed., trans., and annotated with an introduction by J. Gorfinkle. New York: AMS Press.
- Maitzen, S. (2006) "Divine hiddenness and the demographics of theism." *Religious Studies* 42: 177–191.
- Maitzen, S. (2007) "Sceptical theism and God's commands." *Sophia* 46: 235–42.
- Maitzen, S. (2009) "Ordinary morality implies atheism." *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 1(2): 107–126.
- Maitzen, S. (2010) "On Gellman's attempted rescue." *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 2, pp. 193–198.
- Maitzen, S. (2011) "Does God destroy our duty of compassion?" *Free Inquiry* 30(6): 35–37.
- Maitzen, S. (2013) "Atheism and the basis of morality," in A. Musschenga and A. van Harskamp (eds.) *What Makes Us Moral?* Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 257–269.
- Maitzen, S. (2014) "Agnosticism, sceptical theism, and moral obligation," in T. Dougherty and J. McBrayer (eds.) *Sceptical Theism: New Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 277–292.
- Maitzen, S. (2017) "Perfection, evil, and morality," in J. Sterba (ed.) *Ethics and the Problem of Evil*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 141–153.
- Malament, D. (1982) "Review of *Science without Numbers* by Hartry Field." *Journal of Philosophy* 79: 523–534.
- Malament, D. (2012) *Topics in the Foundations of General Relativity and Newtonian Gravitation Theory*. Chicago Lectures in Physics, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Malinowski, B. (1954) *Magic, Science and Religion: And Other Essays*. New York: Doubleday Anchor.
- Malloch, T. (2003) *Social, Human and Spiritual Capital in Economic Development*. Available at <http://www.metanexus.net/archive/spiritualcapitalresearchprogram/pdf/malloch.pdf> (accessed 25 September 2018).
- Mani, A., Mullainathan, S., Shafir, E. and Zhao, J. (2013) "Poverty impedes cognitive function." *Science* 341: 976–980.
- Maréchal, S. (2008) *Dictionnaire des Athées anciens et modernes*. Paris: Chez l'Éditeur.
- Marietta, M. (2008) "From my cold dead hands: Democratic consequences of sacred rhetoric." *Journal of Politics* 70: 767–779.
- Markie, P. (2015) "Rationalism vs. empiricism." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <https://platos.tanfordplato.stanford.edu/entries/rationalism-empiricism/> (accessed 10 September 2018).
- Marlowe, F. (2010) *The Hadza: Hunter-gatherers of Tanzania*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Marmot, M. (2004) *The status syndrome*. London: Bloomsburg.
- Marquis, D. (1985) "Harming the dead." *Ethics* 96: 159–161.
- Martin, M. (1983) "Pascal's wager as an argument for not believing in God." *Religious Studies* 19: 57–64.
- Martin, M. (1990) *Atheism: A Philosophical Justification*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Martin, M. (2002) *Atheism, Morality, and Meaning*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.
- Martin, M., and Monnier, R. (eds.) (2006) *The Improbability of God*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.
- Marx, K., and Engels, F. (1975–2005) *Collected Works*. New York: International Publishers.
- Maudlin, T. (2003) "Distilling metaphysics from quantum physics," in M. Loux and D. Zimmerman (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 461–487.
- Mauriac, C. (1986) *Mauriac et Fils*. Paris: Grasset.

- Mavrodes, G. (1986) "Religion and the queerness of morality," in R. Audi and W. Wainwright (eds.) *Rationality, Religious Belief, and Moral Commitment: New Essays in the Philosophy of Religion*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp. 213–226.
- Mawson, T. (2011) "Theodical individualism." *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 3: 139–159.
- Mawson, T. (2012) "On determining how important it is whether or not there is a God." *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 4: 95–105.
- Mawson, T. (2013) "Recent work on the meaning of life and philosophy of religion." *Philosophy Compass* 8: 1138–1146.
- Mawson, T. (2016) "What God could (and couldn't) do to make life meaningful," in J. Seachris and S. Goetz (eds.) *God and Meaning: New Essays*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 37–58.
- Maxwell, G., (1962) "The ontological status of theoretical entities," in H. Feigl and G. Maxwell (eds.) *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 3. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 3–14.
- May, T. (2015) *A Significant Life: Human Meaning in a Silent Universe*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- McGrew, T., and McGrew, L. (2009) "The argument from miracles: A cumulative case for the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth," in W. L. Craig and J. P. Moreland (eds.) *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 593–662.
- McGinn, C. (2004) *The Atheism Tapes: Colin McGinn*. BBC documentary presented by Jonathan Miller.
- McIntyre, A. (1984) *After Virtue*, 2nd edn. Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press.
- McIntyre, A. (1988) *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press.
- McIntyre, A. (1990) *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry*. Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press.
- McKown, D. (1975) *The Classical Marxist Critiques of Religion: Marx, Engels, Lenin, Kautsky*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- McLaughlin, B. (1997) "Supervenience, vagueness, and determination." *Noûs* 31 (Suppl.), Philosophical Perspectives 11, Mind, Causation, and World: 209–230.
- McLean, G. (2015) "Antipathy to God." *Sophia* 54: 13–24.
- McLellan, D. (1987) *Marxism and Religion: A Description and Assessment of the Marxist Critique of Christianity*. London: Macmillan Press.
- Megill, J., and Linford, D. (2016) "God, the meaning of life, and a new argument for atheism," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 79: 31–47.
- Meister, J. (1881) "Mars 1789," in *Correspondance littéraire*, XV. Paris: Editions M. Tourneux: pp. 415–423.
- Mele, A. (2001) "Acting intentionally: Probing folk notions," in B. Malle, L. Moses, and D. Baldwin (eds.) *Intentions and Intentionality: Foundations of Social Cognition*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 27–43.
- Mele, A. (2003) *Motivation and Agency*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mele, A. (2006) *Free Will and Luck*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mele, A. (2009) *Effective Intentions: The Power of Conscious Will*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mele, A. (2012) "Another scientific threat to free will?" *Monist* 95: 422–440.
- Mele, A. (2013) "Free will, science, and punishment," in T. Nadelhoffer (ed.) *The Future of Punishment*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 177–191.
- Mele, A. (2013) "Libertarianism and human agency." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 87: 72–92.
- Mele, A. (2014) *Free: Why Science Hasn't Disproved Free Will*. New York: Oxford University Press.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Mele, A. (2017) *Aspects of Agency*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Merricks, T. (2007) *Truth and Ontology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Merricks, T. (2015) *Propositions*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mészáros, I. (1972) *Marx's Theory of Alienation*. New York: Harper Row.
- Metz, T. (2013) "How God could assign us a purpose without disrespect." *Quadranti*, 1: 99–112.
- Metz, T. (2013) *Meaning in Life: An Analytic Study*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Metz, T. (2013) "The meaning of life", revised edition, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <https://platos.tanford.edu/entries/life-meaning/> (accessed 19 September 2018).
- Metz, T. (2017) "Meaning of life and afterlife," in B. Matheson and Y. Nagasawa (eds.) *Palgrave Handbook on the Afterlife*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Metz, T. (2018) "God's Role in a Meaningful Life." *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*
- Midgley, M. (1983) *Animals and Why They Matter*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Mill, J. (1874) *Nature, the Utility of Religion, and Theism*. London: Longmans, Green, Reader, & Dyer.
- Miller, B. (1996) *A Most Unlikely God*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Miller, K. (1999) *Finding Darwin's God*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Millican, P. (2004) "The one fatal flaw in Anselm's argument." *Mind* 113: 451–467.
- Mintoff, J. (2008) "Transcending absurdity." *Ratio* 21: 64–84.
- Mittag, D. (n.d) "Evidentialism." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <http://www.iep.utm.edu/evidenti/> (accessed 18 September 2018).
- Monroe, A. and Malle, B. (2010) "From uncaused will to conscious choice: The need to study, not speculate about people's folk concept of free will." *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 1: 211–224.
- Montague, P. R. (2008) "Free will." *Current Biology* 18: R584–385.
- Moore, G. (1925) "A defence of common sense," in J. Muirhead (ed.) *Contemporary British Philosophy*, 2nd series. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Moore, G. (1939) "Proof of an external world." *Proceedings of the British Academy* 25: 273–300.
- Moore, R. (2011) "Narrative of persecution, suffering and martyrdom: Violence in People's Temple and Jonestown," in J. Lewis (ed.) *Violence and New Religious Movements*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 95–111.
- Moravec, H. (1988) *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Moravec, H. (2000) *Robot: Mere Machine to Transcendent Mind*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Moreland, J. (2001) *Universals*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Moroziuk, R. (1974) "The role of atheism in Marxian philosophy." *Studies in Soviet Thought* 14: 191–212.
- Morris, T. (1992) *Making Sense of It All: Pascal and the Meaning of Life*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Morrison, W. (2012) "God and the ontological foundation of morality." *Religious Studies* 48: 15–34.
- Moser, P. (2012) *The Evidence for God: Religious Knowledge Re-Examined*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Moser, P., and Yandell, D. (2000) "Farewell to philosophical naturalism," in W. Craig and J. Moreland (eds.) *Naturalism: A Critical Analysis*. New York: Routledge, pp. 3–24.
- Moyal-Sharrock, D. (2004) *Understanding Wittgenstein's "On Certainty"*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Muenning, P., and Glied, S. (2010) "What changes in survival rates tell us about US health care." *Health Affairs* 29: 2105–2113. >27>
- Mulligan, K and Correia, F. (2013) "Facts." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <http://platos.tanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/facts/> (accessed 17 September 2018).
- Murray, C., et al. (2013) "US burden of disease collaborators: The state of US health, 1990–2010: Burden of diseases, injuries, and risk factors." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 310: 591–608.

- Murray, M. (2002) "Deus absconditus," in D. Howard-Snyder and P. Moser (eds.) *Divine Hiddenness: New Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 62–82.
- Myers, D. (2018) "Religious engagement and living well," in J. Forgas and R. Baumeister (eds.) *The Social Psychology of Living Well*. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Nadelhoffer, T. (2014) "Dualism, libertarianism, and scientific scepticism about free will," in W. Sinnott-Armstrong (ed.) *Moral Psychology: Neuroscience, Free Will, and Responsibility*, Vol. 4, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 209–216.
- Nagasawa, Y. (2011) "Anselmian theism." *Philosophy Compass* 6: 564–571.
- Nagel, T. (1993) "Death," in J. Fischer (ed.) *The Metaphysics of Death*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 59–69.
- Nagel, T. (1997) *The Last Word*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nagel, T. (2009) "Secular philosophy and the religious temperament," in *Secular Philosophy and the Religious Temperament: Essays 2002–2008*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nagel, T. (2012) *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Nahmias, E. (2011) "Why 'willusionism' leads to 'bad results' : Comments on Baumeister, Crescioni, and Alquist." *Neuroethics* 4: 17–24.
- Nancy, J.-L. (2003) "The confronted community." *Postcolonial Studies* 6: 23–36.
- Nancy, J.-L. (2008) *Dis-enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*, trans. G. Malenfant, B. Bergo, and M. Smith. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Nancy, J.-L. (2008) *Noli me tangere: On the Raising of the Body*, trans. P.-A. Brault, S. Clift, and M. Nass. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Nancy, J.-L. (2012) *Adoration: The Deconstruction of Christianity II*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Nash, R. (2006) "A letter to secondary teachers: teaching about religious pluralism in the public schools," in N. Noddings (ed.) *Educating Citizens for Global Awareness*. New York: Teachers College Press, pp. 93–106.
- Naumann, A. (1959) *Ausgewählte Text*. Berlin: Akademie.
- Naville, P. (1967) *Paul Thiry d'Holbach et la philosophie scientifique au XVIIIe siècle*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Nayding, I. (2011) "Conceptual evidentialism." *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 92: 39–65.
- Needham, P. (2002) "The discovery that water is H₂O," *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 16: 205–226.
- Neil, A. (1962) *Summerhill*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Newman, J. (1979) *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Newman, J. (1973) *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, Vol. XXV, ed. C. Dessain and T. Gornall. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Nichols, S. (2004) "Is religion what we want? Motivation and the cultural transmission of religious representations." *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 4: 347–371.
- Nickell, J. (1993) *Looking for a Miracle*. Amherst: Prometheus Books.
- Nielsen, K. (1967) "Wittgensteinian fideism." *Philosophy* 42: 237–254.
- Nielsen, K. (2001) *Naturalism and Religion*. Amherst: Prometheus Books.
- Nietzsche, F. (1968) *The Will to Power*, ed. W. Kaufmann, trans. W. Kaufmann and R. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage.
- Nietzsche, F. (1999) *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, trans. T. Common. New York: Dover.
- Nietzsche, F. (2001) *The Gay Science*, ed. B. Williams, trans. J. Nauckhoff. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nietzsche, F. (2005) *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and other Writings*, ed. A. Ridley and J. Norman, trans. J. Norman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Noah, T. (2102) *The Great Divergence: America's Growing Inequality Crisis and What We Can Do About It*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Noddings, N. (1993) *Educating for Intelligent Belief or Unbelief*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Noddings, N. (1997) "Dialogue between believers and unbelievers." *Religious Education: The Official Journal of the Religious Education Association* 92: 244–253.
- Noddings, N. (2008) "The new outspoken atheism and education." *Harvard Educational Review* 78: 369–430.
- Nolen, W. (1974) *Healing: A Doctor in Search of a Miracle*. New York: Random House.
- Nolt, J. (2014) "Free logic." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/logic-free/> (accessed 23 October 2018).
- Norcross, A. (2005) "Harming in context." *Philosophical Studies* 123: 149–173.
- Norenzayan, A. (2013) *Big Gods: How Religion Transformed Cooperation and Conflict*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Norenzayan, A. (2016) "Theodiversity." *Annual Review of Psychology* 67: 465–488.
- Norenzayan, A., and Gervais, W. (2015) "Secular rule of law eroded believers' political intolerance of atheists." *Religion, Brain and Behaviour* 5: 3–14.
- Norenzayan, A., and Shariff, A. (2008) "The origin and evolution of religious prosociality." *Science* 322: 58–62.
- Norris, P., and Inglehart, R. (2004) *Sacred and Secular*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, P., and Inglehart, R. (2011) *Sacred and secular*, 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Norton, D. (1981) "The Myth of 'British empiricism.'" *History of European Ideas* 1: 331–434.
- Nozick, R. (1981) *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- O'Connor, T. (2000) *Persons and Causes*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Okulicz-Kozaryn, A. (2010) "Religiosity and life satisfaction across nations." *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* 13, 155–169.
- Olson, J. (2014) *Moral Error Theory: History, Critique, Defence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Olssen, E. (1968) "Marx and the resurrection." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 29: 131–140.
- Oppy, G. (1990) "On Rescher on Pascal's wager." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 30: 159–168.
- Oppy, G. (2000) "On a new cosmological argument." *Religious Studies* 36: 345–353.
- Oppy, G. (2003) "The devilish complexities of divine simplicity." *Philo* 6: 10–22.
- Oppy, G. (2006) *Arguing about Gods*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oppy, G. (2010) "Evolution vs creationism in Australian schools," in W. Bonett (ed.) *The Australian Book of Atheism*. Melbourne: Scribe, pp. 139–153.
- Oppy, G. (2014) *Describing Gods: An Investigation of Divine Attributes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oppy, G. (2015) "What derivations cannot do." *Religious Studies* 51: 323–333.
- Oppy, G. (2018) *Atheism: The Basics*. London: Routledge.
- Overall, C. (1985) "Miracles as evidence against the existence of God." *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 23: 347–353.
- Paley, W. (1802) *Natural Theology* (Collected Works, Vol. IV). London: Rivington.
- Papineau, D. (2009) "Naturalism." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2009/entries/naturalism/> (accessed 20 September 2018.).
- Parfit, D. (1984) *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Parinetto, L. (1983) "The legend of Marx's atheism." *Telos* 58: 7–19.
- Park, J., Tom, J., and Andercheck, B. (2014) "Fifty years of religious change." *Council on Contemporary Families*. Paper presented by Jerry Z. Park at the Council on Contemporary Families Civil Rights. Available at <https://contemporaryfamilies.org/50-years-of-religious-change> (accessed 20 September 2018).

- Parliament of NSW Legislative Council (2012) "Education amendment (ethics classes) repeal bill 2011." Available at <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=1769> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Parliament of NSW Legislative Council (2015) "1990 Education Act, No 8." Available at <http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/act/1990/8> (accessed 18 September 2018).
- Parsons, T. (1994) "Ruth Barcan Marcus and the Barcan formula," in W. Sinnott-Armstrong (ed.) *Modality, Morality, and Belief: Essays in Honour of Ruth Barcan Marcus*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 3–11.
- Partridge, E. (1981) "Posthumous interests and posthumous respect." *Ethics* 91: 243–264.
- Pascal, B. (1910) *Pensées*, trans. W. Trotter. London: Dent.
- Pascal, B. (1966) *Pensées*, trans. with introduction by A. Krailsheimer. New York: Penguin.
- Pascal, B. (2008) *Pensées and Other Writings*, ed. A. Levi, trans. H. Levi. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pasnau, R. (2002) *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of Summa Theologiae 1a 75–89* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Pasnau, R. (2015) "Divine illumination." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/illumination/> (accessed 23 October 2018).
- Paśniczek, J. (2001) "Can Meinongian logic be free?," in E. Morscher and A. Hieke (eds.) *New Essays in Free Logic: In Honour of Karel Lambert*, Applied Logic Series, Vol. 23. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 227–238.
- Paul, G. (2005) "Cross-national correlations of quantifiable societal health with popular religiosity and secularism in the prosperous democracies." *Journal of Religion and Society* 7. Available from <https://dspace2.creighton.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10504/64409/2005-11.pdf?sequence=1> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Paul, G. (2008) "The remote prayer delusion: Clinical trials that attempt to detect supernatural intervention are as futile as they are unethical." *Journal of Medical Ethics* 34: e18.
- Paul, G. (2009) "The chronic dependence of popular religiosity upon "dysfunctional psychosociological conditions." *Evolutionary Psychology* 7: 398–441.
- Paul, G. (2009) "How are other First-World nations suppressing the adverse consequences of violence and youth sex in the modern media environment?" *Pediatrics* 123: e364.
- Paul, G. (2009) "Theodicy's problem: A statistical look at the holocaust of the children and the implications of natural evil for the free will and best of all possible worlds hypotheses." *Philosophy and Theology* 19: 125–149.
- Paul, G. (2010) "The evolution of popular religiosity and secularism: How First World statistics reveal why religion exists, why it has been popular, and why the most successful democracies are the most secular," in P. Zuckerman (ed.) *Atheism and Secularity*. Santa Barbara: Praeger, pp. 49–209.
- Paul, G. (2010) "Religiosity tied to socioeconomic conditions." *Science* 327: 642.
- Paul, G. (2012) "Why religion is unable to minimize lethal and nonlethal societal dysfunction within and between nations," in T. Shackelford and V. Weekes (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook on Evolutionary Perspectives on Violence, Homicide, and War*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 435–470.
- Paul, G. (2014) "The health of nations: An empirical study on the effects of religion and economic policy." *Sceptic* 19: 10–16.
- Paul, G., and Zuckerman, P. (2011) "Don't dump on atheists." *Washington Post*, A15.
- Pedlar, J. (2012) "Sensing the spirit: Wesley's empiricism and his use of the language of spiritual sensation." *Asbury Journal* 67: 85–104.
- Peipert, J., Madden, T., Allsworth, J., and Secura, G. (2012) "Preventing unintended pregnancies by providing no-cost contraceptives." *Obstetrics and Gynecology* 120: 1291–1297.
- Peirce, C. (1931–1958) *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. C. Hartshorne, P. Weiss, and A. Burks. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Peirce, C. (1992) *The Essential Peirce*, Vol. 1, ed. N. Houser and C. Kloesel. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Peirce, C. (1998) "A neglected argument for the existence of God," in *The Essential Peirce*, Vol. 2, ed. Peirce Edition Project. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 434–450. First published 1908 in the *Hibbert Journal*.
- Penner, M. (2015) "Personal anti-theism and the meaningful life argument." *Faith and Philosophy* 32: 325–337.
- Penner, M., and Loughheed, K. (2015) "Pro-theism and the added value of morally good agents." *Philosophia Christi* 17, Summer: 53–70."
- Pennock, R. (1998) *Tower of Babel: Scientific Evidence and the New Creationism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Pennock, R., and Ruse, M. (eds.) (2008) *But Is It Science? The Philosophical Question in the Creation/ Evolution Controversy*, 2nd edn. Amherst: Prometheus Books.
- Pereboom, D. (2005) "Free will, evil, and divine providence," in A. Dole and A. Chignell (eds.) *God and the Ethics of Belief*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 77–98.
- Perez, J. (2006) *The Spanish Inquisition: A History*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Perrin, J. (1916) *Atoms*, trans. D. Hammick. New York: D van Nostrand.
- Peters, K. (2002) *Dancing with the Sacred: Evolution, Ecology, and God*. Harrisburg: Trinity Press International.
- Peterson, J. (1999) *Maps of Meaning: The Architecture of Belief*. New York: Routledge.
- Peterson, M. (2011) "A new twist to the St. Petersburg Paradox." *Journal of Philosophy* 108: 697–699.
- Pew Forum (2002) "Among wealthy nations US stands alone in its embrace of religion." *Pew Global Attitudes Project*. Available at <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/pdf/167.pdf> (accessed 25 September 2018).
- Pew Forum (2008) *US Religious Landscape Survey: Religious Beliefs and Practices*. Available at <http://www.pewforum.org/2008/06/01/u-s-religious-landscape-survey-religious-beliefs-and-practices/> (accessed 11 September 2018).
- Pew Forum (2009) "Mystical experiences." Available at <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2009/12/29/mystical-experiences/> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Pew Forum (2014) "Americans' faith in God may be eroding." Available at <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/04/americans-faith-in-god-may-be-eroding/> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Pew Forum (2014) "Millennials in Adulthood." Available at <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/03/07/millennials-in-adulthood/> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Pew Forum (2014) "Religious hostilities reach six-year high." Available at <http://www.pewforum.org/2014/01/14/religious-hostilities-reach-six-year-high> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Pew Forum (2015) "America: Changing religious landscapes." Available at <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Pew Forum (2015) "The future of world religions: Population growth projections, 2010–2050." Available at <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050> (accessed 20 December 2018).
- Pew (2016) *Religion in Everyday Life*. Available at <http://www.pewforum.org/2016/04/12/religion-in-everyday-life/> (accessed 14 September 2018).
- Philips, M. (2006) *Londonistan: How Britain is Creating a Terror State Within*. New York: Encounter Books.
- Philippe, H. (2012) *God in the Age of Science: A Critique of Religious Reason*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Philipse, H. (2016) "Ethics and religion disconnected," in S. Herzberg and H. Watzka (eds.) *Transzendenzlos glücklich? Zur Entkoppelung von Ethik und Religion in der postchristlichen Gesellschaft*. Münster: Aschendorf, pp. 153–166.
- Phillips, D. (1976) *Religion without Explanation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pike, N. (1970) *God and Timelessness*. New York: Schocken.
- Pike, S. (2005) "No novenas for the dead: Ritual action and communal memory at the Temple of Tears," in L. Gilmore and M. Van Proyen (2005) *AfterBurn: Reflections on Burning Man*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, pp. 195–214.
- Pitcher, G. (1993) "The misfortunes of the dead," in J. Fischer (ed.) *The Metaphysics of Death*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 157–168.
- Plantinga, A. (1974) *The Nature of Necessity*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Plantinga, A. (1983) "Reason and belief in God," in A. Plantinga and N. Wolterstorff (eds.) *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, pp. 16–93.
- Plantinga, A. (2000) *Warranted Christian Belief*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Plantinga, A. (2008) "Against naturalism," in Plantinga, A., and Tooley, M. (2008) *Knowledge of God*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 1–69.
- Plantinga, A. (2012) "Why Darwinist materialism is wrong." Review of Nagel's *Mind and Cosmos*, *The New Republic*, 12 November. Available at <https://newrepublic.com/article/110189/why-darwinist-materialism-wrong> (accessed 13 September 2018).
- Plantinga, A., and Tooley, M. (2008) *Knowledge of God*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Plato (1997) *Complete Works*, ed. J. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Plato (1998) *The Republic*, trans. R. Waterfield. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Plato (2015) *The Euthyphro*, trans. Benjamin Jowett. Charleton: CreateSpace.
- Popper, K. (2002) *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Popper, K. (2011) *The Open Society and its Enemies*. New York: Routledge.
- Portmore, D. (2007) "Desire fulfilment and posthumous harm." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 44: 27–38.
- Pour-El, M., and Richards, I. (1983) "Non-computability in analysis and physics: A complete determination of the class of non-computable linear operator." *Advances in Mathematics* 48: 44–74.
- Powell, L., Shahabi, L., and Thoresen, C. (2003) "Religion and spirituality: Linkages to physical health." *American Psychologist* 58: 36–52.
- Powell, R., and Clarke, S. (2012) "Religion as an evolutionary by-product: A critique of the standard model." *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 63: 457–486.
- Priest, G. (2006) *In Contradiction: A Study of the Transconsistent*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Priest, G. (2008) *An Introduction to Non-Classical Logic: From If to Is*, 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Priest, G. (2009) "Beyond the limits of knowledge," in J. Salerno (ed.) *New Essays on the Knowability Paradox*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 93–104.
- Primary Ethics (2015) "Our curriculum." Available at <https://primaryethics.com.au/about-ethics-classes/our-curriculum/> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Primary Ethics (2016) "About our classes." Available at <https://primaryethics.com.au/about-ethics-classes/> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Primary Ethics (2016) "Our history." Available at <https://primaryethics.com.au/about/our-history/> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- Pritchard, D. (2003) "Reforming reformed epistemology." *International Philosophical Quarterly* 43: 43–66.
- Pritchard, D. (2005) *Epistemic Luck*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Pritchard, D. (2008) "Certainty and acepticism." *Noûs* 18: 58–67.
- Pritchard, D. (2008) "The structure of sceptical arguments." *Philosophical Quarterly* 55: 37–52.
- Pritchard, D. (2010) "Relevant alternatives, perceptual knowledge, and discrimination." *Noûs* 44: 245–268.
- Pritchard, D. (2011) "Wittgensteinian quasi-fideism." *Oxford Studies in the Philosophy of Religion* 4: 145–159.
- Pritchard, D. (2011) "Wittgenstein on scepticism," in O. Kuusela and M. McGinn (eds.) *Oxford Handbook on Wittgenstein*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 521–547.
- Pritchard, D. (2012) "Wittgenstein and the groundlessness of our believing." *Synthese* 189: 255–272.
- Pritchard, D. (2014) "Entitlement and the groundlessness of our believing," in D. Dodd and E. Zardini (eds.) *Contemporary Perspectives on Scepticism and Perceptual Justification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 190–213.
- Pritchard, D. (2015) *Epistemic Angst: Radical Scepticism and the Groundlessness of Our Believing*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Pritchard, D. (2015) "Wittgenstein on faith and reason: The influence of Newman," in M. Szatkowski (ed.) *God, Truth and Other Enigmas*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 141–164.
- Pritchard, D. (2017) "Faith and reason." *Religious Epistemology* 81: 110–118.
- Pritchard, D. (2017) "Wittgenstein on hinge commitments and radical scepticism in *On Certainty*," in H-J. Glock and J. Hyman (eds.) *Blackwell Companion to Wittgenstein*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 563–575.
- Pritchard, D. (2018) "Epistemic Angst." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 96: 70–90.
- Pritchard, D. (forthcoming) "Quasi-fideism and religious conviction," in M. Szatkowski (ed.) *Epistemology of Religious Belief*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Prugovečki, E. (1971) *Quantum Mechanics in Hilbert Space*. New York: Academic Press.
- Pryor, J. (2000) "The sceptic and the dogmatist." *Noûs* 34: 517–549.
- Psillos, S. (2002) "Simply the best: A case for abduction," in A. Kakas and F. Sadri (eds.) *Computational Logic: Logic Programming and Beyond*. Berlin: Springer-Verlag, pp. 605–626.
- Psillos, S. (2004) "Inference to the best explanation and Bayesianism," in F. Stadler (ed.) *Induction and Deduction in the Sciences*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, pp. 83–91.
- Putnam, H. (1975) "Philosophy and our mental life," in *Mind, Language, and Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Reprinted in N. Block (ed.) *Readings in Philosophy of Psychology*, Vol. 1, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980, pp. 134–143.
- Putnam, H. (1978) *Meaning and the Moral Sciences*. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Putnam, H. (1979) *Mathematics Matter and Method*, Philosophical Papers, Vol. 1, 2nd edn. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Putnam, R., and Campbell, D. (2010) *American Grace*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Pyle, A. (2006) *Hume's "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion": A Reader's Guide*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Quine, W. (1951) "Two dogmas of empiricism." *Philosophical Review* 60: 20–43; reprinted in W. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953.
- Quine, W. (1953) *From a Logical Point of View*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Quine, W. (1974) *The Roots of Reference*. The Paul Carus Lectures. LaSalle: Open Court.
- Quine, W. (1995) "Naturalism; Or, Living within One's Means." *Dialectica* 49: 251–261.
- Quinn, P. (2000) "How Christianity secures life's meanings," in J. Runzo and N. Martin (eds.), *The Meaning of Life in the World Religions*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, pp. 53–68.
- Rachels, J. (1997) "God and moral autonomy," in *Can Ethics Provide Answers? And Other Essays in Moral Philosophy*. Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 109–123.
- Randi, J. (1989) *The Faith Healers*. Amherst: Prometheus Books.
- Rawls, J. (1993) *Political Liberalism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Rawls, J. (1999) *The Law of Peoples*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rawls, J. (2000) *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy*, ed. B. Herman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Raz, J. (1986) *The Morality of Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rea, M. (2002) *World Without Design: The Ontological Consequences of Naturalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rea, M. (2015) "Hiddenness and transcendence," in A. Green and E. Stump (eds.) *Hidden Divinity and Religious Belief: New Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 210–225.
- RedC. (2012) "Global index of religion and atheism." Available at <https://sidmennt.is/wp-content/uploads/Gallup-International-um-tr%C3%BA-og-tr%C3%BAleysi-2012.pdf> (accessed 25 September 2018).
- Rees, T. (2009) "Is personal insecurity a cause of cross-national differences in the intensity of religious belief?" *Journal of Religion and Society* 11: 1–24.
- Reichenbach, H. (1961) *Experience and Prediction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Reid, J. (2015) "The common consent argument from Herbert to Hume." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 53: 401–433.
- Reid, T. (2004) *The United States of Europe*. New York: Penguin.
- Reid, T. (2009) *The Healing of America*. New York: Penguin.
- Reisner, A. (2009) "The possibility of pragmatic reasons for belief and the wrong kind of reasons problem." *Philosophical Studies* 145, 257–272.
- Rescher, N. (1990) "On faith and belief," in *Human Interests*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 166–178.
- Resnik, M. (1997) *Mathematics as a Science of Patterns*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rey, G. (2007) "Meta-atheism: Religious avowal as self-deception" in L. Antony (ed.) *Philosophers without Gods: Meditations on Atheism and the Secular Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 243–265.
- Richards, J. (ed.) (2002) *Are We Spiritual Machines? Ray Kurzweil vs. The Critics of Strong AI*. Seattle: Discovery Institute.
- Richards, R., and Ruse, M. (2016) *Debating Darwin*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Richardson, A. (1994) "The limits of tolerance: Carnap's logico-philosophical project in logical syntax of language." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 68 (Suppl.): 67–83.
- Richardson, S. (1720) *Of the Torments of Hell: The Foundation and Pillars Thereof Discovered, Searched, Shaken, Removed*, 2nd edn. London: W. Boreham.
- Richardson, S. (1769) *L'Enfer Détruit*, trans. P. d'Holbach. Amsterdam: M. M. Rey.
- Riesz, E., and Sz-Nagy, B. (1990) *Functional Analysis*, 2nd edn, trans. L. Boron. New York: Dover.
- Rinard, S. (2017) "No exception for belief." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 94: 121–143.
- Robespierre, M. (1867) *Œuvres complètes*, Texte établi par recueillies et annotées part A, Vermorel: F. Cournol.
- Roland, M. (1827) *Mémoires*, I, 3rd edn, ed. St.-A. Berville et F. Barrière. Paris: Baudoin Freres.
- Rollins, J. (2015) "Beliefs and testimony as social evidence: Epistemic egoism, epistemic universalism, and common consent arguments." *Philosophy Compass* 10: 78–90.
- Rosch, E. (1977) "Classification of real-world objects: origins and representations in cognition," in P. Johnson-Laird and P. Wason *Thinking: Readings in Cognitive Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 212–222.
- Rose, L. (1968) *Faith Healing*. London: Victor Gollancz.
- Rosenbaum, S. (1993) "How to be dead and not care: A defense of Epicurus." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 23: 217–225.
- Rosenbaum, E. (2009) "Patient teenagers? A comparison of the sexual behavior of virginity pledgers and matched non-pledgers" *Pediatrics* 123: e110–e120.
- Ross, W. (2002) *The Right and the Good*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Rousseau, J. (1959) *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. B. Gangebin, B. and M. Raymond. Paris: Gallimard.
- Rousseau, J. (1979) *Emile; or: On Education*, trans. A. Bloom. New York: Basic Books.
- Rousseau, J. (1994) *The Social Contract*, trans. R. Betts. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rowe, W. (1979) "The problem of evil and some varieties of atheism." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16: 335–341.
- Royall, R. (1997) *Statistical Evidence: A Likelihood Paradigm*. Boca Raton: Chapman & Hall.
- Ruiter, S., and Tubergen, F. (2009) "Religious attendance in cross-national perspective: A multi-level analysis of 60 countries." *American Journal of Sociology* 115: 863–895.
- Rundle, B. (2004) *Why There is Something Rather than Nothing*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Ruse, M. (1975) "Charles Darwin's theory of evolution: An analysis." *Journal of the History of Biology* 8: 219–241.
- Ruse, M. (1979) *The Darwinian Revolution: Science Red in Tooth and Claw*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ruse, M. (ed.) (1988) *But is it Science? The Philosophical Question in the Creation/Evolution Controversy*. Amherst: Prometheus Books.
- Ruse, M. (1996) *Monad to Man: The Concept of Progress in Evolutionary Biology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ruse, M. (2001) *Can a Darwinian be a Christian? The Relationship between Science and Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ruse, M. (2005) "The Darwinian revolution as seen in 1979 and as seen twenty-five years later in 2004." *Journal of the History of Biology* 38: 3–17.
- Ruse, M. (2005) *The Evolution–Creation Struggle*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ruse, M. (2006) *Darwinism and Its Discontents*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ruse, M. (2010) *Science and Spirituality: Making Room for Faith in the Age of Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ruse, M. (2011) "The shame of Calvin College." *Brainstorm: Chronicle of Higher Education*, 20 July. Available at <http://www.chronicle.com/blogs/brainstorm/the-shame-of-calvin-college/37484> (accessed 18 September 2018).
- Ruse, M. (2015) *Atheism: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ruse, M. (2017) *Darwinism as Religion: What Literature Tells Us about Evolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ruse, M. (2017) *On Purpose*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Russell, B. (1916) *Principles of Social Reconstruction*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Russell, B. (1920) *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Russell, B. (1943) *An Outline of Intellectual Rubbish: A Hilarious Catalogue of Organized and Individual Stupidity*. Girard, KS: Haldeman-Julius.
- Russell, B. (1947) *Can Man Be Rational?* Girard, KS: Haldeman-Julius.
- Russell, B. (1949) *Am I an Atheist or an Agnostic?: A Plea for Tolerance in the Face of New Dogmas*. Girard, KS: Haldeman-Julius.
- Russell, B. (1949) "Unity of Western culture." *World Review* 2: 5–8.
- Russell, B. (1951) "Why I took to philosophy," in B. Russell (ed.) *Portraits from Memory and Other Essays*. New York: Simon & Schuster, pp. 13–18.
- Russell, B. (1956) "The philosophy of logical atomism," in *Logic and Knowledge: Essays 1901–1950*, ed. R. Marsh. London: George Allen & Unwin, pp. 177–281.
- Russell, B. (1957) "Preface," in P. Edwards (ed.) *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*. New York: Simon & Schuster, pp. v–vii.
- Russell, B. (1961) "What is an Agnostic?" in R. Egner and L. Denonn (eds.) *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell 1903–1959*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 577–584.
- Russell, B. (1961) "Why I am not a Christian," in R. Egner and L. Denonn (eds.) *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell 1903–1959*. New York: Simon & Schuster, pp. 585–597.

- Russell, B. (1963) "Reply to criticisms," in P. Schilpp (ed.) *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell*, Vol. II, 3rd edn. New York: Harper & Row, pp. 679–741.
- Russell, B. (1969) *Dear Bertrand Russell: A Selection of His Correspondence with the General Public 1950–1968*, ed. B. Feinberg and R. Kasrils. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Russell, B. (1972) *Atheism: Collected Essays, 1943–1949*, ed. M. O'Hair. New York: Arno Press/New York Times.
- Russell, B. (1997) *Religion and Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Russell, B. (1999) "The essence and effect of religion," in S. Andersson and L. Greenspan (eds.) *Russell on Religion*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 70–76.
- Russell, P., and Kraal, A. (2017) "Hume on religion." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume-religion/> (accessed 23 October 2018).
- Russell, R. (2008) *Cosmology: From Alpha to Omega: The Creative Mutual Interaction of Theology and Science*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Sainsbury, R. (2010) *Fiction and Fictionalism*. New York: Routledge.
- Salerno, J. (2009) "Introduction," in J. Salerno (ed.) *New Essays on the Knowability Paradox*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 1–10.
- Salerno, J. (2009) "Knowability noir: 1945–1963," in J. Salerno (ed.) *New Essays on the Knowability Paradox*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 29–48.
- Salles, S. (2010) "O Sentido da Vida e o Propósito de Deus." *Fundamento* 1: 84–110.
- Salmon, W. (1999) "Ornithology in a cubical world," in D. Greenberger et al. (eds) *Epistemological and Experimental Perspectives on Quantum Physics*, Vienna Circle Institute Yearbook 7. Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 303–315.
- Salmon, W. (2001) "Explanation and confirmation: A Bayesian critique of inference to the best explanation," in G. Hon and S. S. Rakover (eds.) *Explanation: Theoretical Approaches and Applications*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, pp. 61–91.
- Sandel, M. (2005) *Public Philosophy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sandrier, A. (2004) *Le style philosophique du baron d'Holbach: conditions et contraintes du prosélytisme athée en France dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle*. Paris: H. Champion.
- Sapolsky, R. (2005) "Sick of poverty." *Scientific American* 293/6: 92–99.
- Sartre, J-P. (1964) *The Words*. New York: George Braziller.
- Sartre, J-P. (1966) "Jean-Paul Sartre répond." *L'Arc* 30: 87–96.
- Sartre, J-P. (1984) *Being and Nothingness*, trans. H. Barnes. New York: Washington Square Press.
- Sartre, J-P. (1989) "Existentialism is a humanism," trans. P. Mairet, in W. Kaufmann (ed.) *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre*. London: Meridian.
- Sartre, J-P. (2001) "Existentialism is a humanism," in *Jean-Paul Sartre: Basic Writings*, trans P. Mairet, ed. with introduction by S. Priest. London: Routledge.
- Sauter, H., and Loos, E. (eds.) (1986) *Paul Thiry baron d'Holbach. Die gesammelte Korrespondenz* Wiesbaden/Stuttgart: Frank Steiner.
- Scheepers, P., Gijsberts, M., and Hello, E. (2002) "Religiosity and prejudice against ethnic minorities in Europe: Cross-national tests on a controversial relationship." *Review of Religious Research* 43: 242–265.
- Scheffler, S. (2013) *Death and the Afterlife*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Schellenberg, J. (2004) "Does divine hiddenness justify atheism?" in M. Peterson and R. Van Arragon (eds.) *Contemporary Debates in the Philosophy of Religion*. Oxford: Blackwell. 30–41.
- Schellenberg, J. (2006) *Divine Hiddenness and Human Reason*, 2nd edn. Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Schellenberg, J. (2007) *The Wisdom to Doubt: A Justification of Religious Scepticism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Schellenberg, J. (2013) "Religious diversity and religious scepticism," in K. Schilbrack (ed.) *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Religious Diversity*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Schellenberg, J. (2015) "Divine hiddenness and human philosophy," in A. Green and E. Stump (eds.) *Hidden Divinity and Religious Belief: New Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 13–32.
- Schellenberg, J. (2015). *The Hiddenness Argument. Philosophy's New Challenge to Belief in God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schiller, F. (1927) "William James and the making of pragmatism." *Personalist* 8: 81–93.
- Schjoedt, U. (2009) "The religious brain: A general introduction to the experimental neuroscience of religion." *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 21: 310–339.
- Schlesinger, G. (1994) "A central theistic argument," in J. Jordan (ed) *Gambling on God: Essays on Pascal's Wager*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Schoen, C. Osborn, R., Huynh, P. T. (2005) "Taking the pulse of health care systems: Experience of patients with health problems in six countries/" *PubMed* (Suppl.). Available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16269444> (accessed 25 September 2018).
- Schönbaumsfeld, G. (2016) *The Illusion of Doubt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schuld, J. (2003) *Foucault and Augustine: Reconsidering Power and Love*. Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press.
- Schuller, P. (1975) "Karl Marx's atheism." *Science and Society* 39: 331–345.
- Schurz, G. (2002) "Alethic modal logics and semantics," in D. Jacquette (ed.) *A Companion to Philosophical Logic*. Malden: Blackwell, pp. 442–477.
- Schwarz, W. (2013) "Generalising Kripke semantics for quantified modal logics." Available at <http://www.umsu.de/papers/generalising.pdf> (accessed 21 September 2018).
- Scriven, M. (1966) *Primary Philosophy*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Seachris, J. (2009) "The meaning of life as narrative: A new proposal for interpreting philosophy's 'primary' question." *Philo* 12: 5–23.
- Sedgh, G., Henshaw, S., Singh, S., Ahman, E., and Shah, I. H. (2007) "Induced abortion: Estimated rates and trends worldwide." *The Lancet* 37: 1338–1345.
- Sedley, D. (2007) *Creationism and its Critics in Antiquity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Selengut, C. (2003) *Sacred Fury: Understanding Religious Violence*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.
- Shafer-Landau, R. (2003) *Moral Realism: A Defence*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Shafer-Landau, R. (2006) "Moral reasons," in R. Shafer-Landau and T. Cuneo (eds.) *Foundations of Ethics: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 312–327.
- Shafer-Landau, R. (2007) "Moral and theological realism: The explanatory argument." *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 4: 311–329.
- Shafer-Landau, R. (2012) "Evolutionary debunking, moral realism and moral knowledge." *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* 7: 1–37.
- Shah, I., and Ahman, E. (2009) "Unsafe abortion: Global and regional incidence, trends, consequences, and challenges." *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Canada* 12: 1149–1158.
- Shah, N. (2006) "A new argument for evidentialism." *Philosophical Quarterly* 56: 481–498.
- Shankar, R. (1994) *The Principles of Quantum Mechanics*, 2nd edn. New York: Springer.
- Shapiro, S. (2014) *Varieties of Logic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sher, G. (1997) *Beyond Neutrality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shermer, M. (2006) "Bowling for God." *Scientific American* 295/6: 44.
- Sider, T. (2009) "Williamson's many necessary existents." *Analysis* 69: 250–258.
- Sider, T. (2010) *Logic for Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sider, T. (2011) *Writing the Book of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sider, T. (2016) "On Williamson and simplicity in modal logic." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 46: 683–698.
- Sidgwick, H. (1962) *The Methods of Ethics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Siegel, P. (2005) *The Meek and the Militant: Religion and Power across the World*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.

- Singer, I. (1996) *Meaning of Life, Vol. 1, The Creation of Value*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Sinnott-Armstrong, W. (1995) "Moral scepticism and justification," in W. Sinnott-Armstrong and M. Timmons (eds.) *Moral Knowledge? New Readings in Moral Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 3–48.
- Sinnott-Armstrong, W. (2006) "Moral intuitionism meets empirical psychology," in T. Horgan and M. Timmons (eds.) *Metaethics After Moore*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 339–365.
- Sinnott-Armstrong, W. (2006) *Moral Scepticisms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sinnott-Armstrong, W. (2009) *Morality Without God?* New York: Oxford University Press.
- Skarsaune, K. (2010) "Darwin and moral realism: Survival of the iffiest." *Philosophical Studies* 152: 2229–2243.
- Sloan R. (2006) *Blind Faith: The Unholy Alliance of Religion and Medicine*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Smart, B. (ed.) (1994) *Michel Foucault: Critical Assessments*, Vol. 1. London: Routledge.
- Smart, J. (2016) "Atheism and agnosticism." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <http://platos.tanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/atheism-agnosticism/> (accessed 17 September 2018).
- Smith, A. (1776) *An Inquiry into the Nature and Cause of the Wealth of Nations*. London: W. Strahan & T. Cadell.
- Smith, H. (2000) "The meaning of life in the world's religions," in J. Runzo and N. Martin (eds.) *The Meaning of Life in the World Religions*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, pp. 255–268.
- Smith, J. (1999) "The devil in Mr. Jones," in R. McCutcheon (ed.) *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion*. London: Cassell, pp. 370–389.
- Smith, M. (2000) "Moral realism," in H. LaFollette (ed.) *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory* Oxford: Blackwell, 15–37
- Smith, M. (2005) "Meta-ethics," in E. Jackson and M. Smith (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 3–30.
- Smith, Q. (1997) *Ethical and Religious Thought in Analytic Philosophy of Language*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Snitow, A. (2015) *The Feminism of Uncertainty: A Gender Diary*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Snook, I. (1972) *Indoctrination and Education*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Soames, S. (2009) "Why propositions can't be sets of truth-supporting circumstances," in *Philosophical Essays: The Philosophical Significance of Language*, Vol. 2. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 72–80.
- Sobel, J. (2004) *Logic and Theism: Arguments For and Against belief in God*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sober, E. (1990) "Contrastive empiricism," in W. Savage (ed.) *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Vol. 14: Scientific Theories*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 392–412.
- Sober, E. (1999) "Testability." *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 73: 47–76.
- Sober, E. (2004). "Likelihood, model selection, and the Duhem-Quine problem." *Journal of Philosophy* 101: 1–22.
- Sober, E. (2008) *Evidence and Evolution: The Logic behind the Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sober, E. (2010) "Empiricism," in S. Psillos and M. Curd (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Science*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 129–138.
- Sober, E. (2015) *Ockham's Razor: A User's Manual*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Soon, C., Brass, M. Heinze, H., and Haynes, J. (2008) "Unconscious determinants of free decisions in the human brain." *Nature Neuroscience* 11: 543–545.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Sosis, R. (2005) "Does religion promote trust? The role of signalling, reputation, and punishment." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 1: 1–30.
- Spencer, H. (1884) *The Man Versus the State*. London: William & Norgate.
- Squires, D. (2011) "The US health system in perspective: A comparison of twelve industrialized nations." *Issues of International Health Policy* 16: 1–14.
- Stalnaker, R. (1976) "Propositions," in A. MacKay and D. Merrill (eds.) *Issues in the Philosophy of Language: Proceedings of the 1972 Oberlin Colloquium in Philosophy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 79–91.
- Stanner, W. (1965) "The Dreaming," in W. Lessa and E. Vogt (eds.) *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, 3rd edition. New York: Harper & Row, pp. 269–277. First published in T. A. G. Hungerford (ed.) *Australian Signposts*. Melbourne: F. W. Cheshire, 1956.
- Stanton, E. (1889) *A History of Women's Suffrage*, Vol. 1. Rochester: Fowler & Wells.
- Stanton, E. (1993) *Eighty Years and More: Reminiscences 1895–1897*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press.
- Stanton, E. (1993). *The Woman's Bible*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Stanton, E. (2007) *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Feminist as Thinker*, ed. E. DuBois and C. Smith. New York: New York University Press.
- Stanton T., and Stanton B. (eds.) (1922). *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary, and Reminiscences*. New York: Harper.
- Steinhart, E. (2012) "Digital theology: Is the resurrection virtual?," in M. Luck (ed.) (2012) *A Philosophical Exploration of New and Alternative Religious Movements*. Farnham: Ashgate, pp. 133–152.
- Steinhart, E. (2012) "On the number of gods," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 72: 75–83.
- Steinhart, E. (2013) "On the plurality of gods." *Religious Studies* 49: 289–312.
- Steinhart, E. (2014) *Your Digital Afterlives: Computational Theories of Life after Death*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Stephenson, C. (2004) "Leveraging diversity to maximum advantage: The business case for appointing more women to boards." *Ivery Business Journal*, 69: 1–5.
- Stern, J. (2003) *Terror in the Name of God*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Stern, K. (2013) *With Charity for All: Why Charities are Failing and a Better Way to Give*. New York: Doubleday.
- Stevenson, L. (2002) "Six levels of mentality." *Philosophical Explorations* 5: 105–124.
- Stiglitz, J. (2012) *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers our Future*. New York: Norton.
- Stillman, T., Baumeister, R., and Mele, A. (2011) "Free will in everyday life: Autobiographical accounts of free and unfree actions." *Philosophical Psychology* 24: 381–394.
- Stirner, M. (1995) *The Ego and Its Own*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Stoljar, D., and Damjanovic, N. (2010) "The deflationary theory of truth." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <http://platos.tanford.edu/archives/win2010/entries/truth-deflationary/> (accessed 17 September 2018).
- Stone, J. (2008) *Religious Naturalism Today*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Stouffer, S. (1955) *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties*. New York: Doubleday.
- Strawson, G. (1990) "Review of *Created from Animals*, by James Rachels." *The Independent on Sunday*, June.
- Strawson, G. (2012) "What can be proved about God?" Letter to the Editor, *New York Review of Books*, December 6.
- Strayhorn, J., and Strayhorn, J. (2009) "Religiosity and teen birth rate in the United States." *Reproductive Health* 6: 1–7.

- Street, S. (2006) "A Darwinian dilemma for realist theories of value." *Philosophical Studies* 127: 109–166.
- Street, S. (2014) "If everything happens for a reason, then we don't know what reasons are: Why the price of theism is normative scepticism," in M. Bergmann and P. Kain (eds.) *Challenges to Moral and Religious Belief: Disagreement and Evolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 173–192.
- Stromberg, R. (1979) "Marxism and religion." *Studies in Soviet Thought* 19: 209–217.
- Stump, E. (1985) "The problem of evil." *Faith and Philosophy* 2: 392–423.
- Stump, E. (1997) "Simplicity," in P. Quinn and C. Taliaferro (eds.) *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Stump, E., and Kretzmann, N. (1981) "Eternity." *Journal of Philosophy* 78: 429–458.
- Sturgeon, N. (1984) "Moral explanations," in D. Copp and D. Zimmerman (eds.) *Morality, Reason and Truth*. Totowa: Rowman & Allanheld, pp. 49–78.
- Sturgeon, N. (2006) "Ethical naturalism," in D. Copp (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 91–121.
- Subramuniyaswami, S. (2000) *Loving Ganeśa: Hinduism's Endearing Elephant-Faced God*. Kapaa: Himalayan Academy.
- Sullivan, M. (2018) *Time Biases: A Theory of Rational Planning and Personal Persistence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Swift, S. (2014) "Wollstonecraft's religious characters," in E. Steiner (ed.) *Called to Civil Existence*. Amsterdam: Rodopi Press, pp. 131–154.
- Swinburne, R. (1974) "Duty and the will of God." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 4: 213–227.
- Swinburne, R. (1994) *The Christian God*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Swinburne, R. (2004) *The Existence of God*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Swinburne, R. (2016) *The Coherence of Theism*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Swinburne, R. (2016) "How God makes life a lot more meaningful," in J. Seachris and S. Goetz (eds.) *God and Meaning: New Essays*. New York: Bloomsbury, pp. 149–164.
- Sylvan, R. (2005) *Trance Formation*. New York: Routledge.
- Tait, K. (1975) *My Father Bertrand Russell*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Tan, J., and Vogel, C. (2008) "Religion and trust: An experimental study." *Journal of Economic Psychology* 29: 832–848.
- Tarski, A. (1983) *Logic, Semantics, Meta-mathematics: Papers from 1923 to 1938*, 2nd edn, ed. with introduction by J. Corcoran, trans. J. Woodger. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Tartaglia, J. (2015) *Philosophy in a Meaningless Life*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Taves, A., and Asprem, E. (2017) "Experience as event: Event cognition and the study of (religious) experiences." *Religion, Brain and Behaviour* 7: 43–62.
- Taylor, B. (2002) "The religious foundations of Mary Wollstonecraft's feminism," in C. Johnson (ed.) *Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 99–118.
- Taylor, J. (2005) "The myth of posthumous harm." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 42: 311–322.
- Taylor, R. (1966) *Action and Purpose*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Taylor, R. (1987) "Time and life's meaning." *Review of Metaphysics* 40: 675–686.
- Tegmark, M. (1998) "Is 'The Theory of Everything' merely the Ultimate Ensemble Theory?" *Annals of Physics* 270: 1–51.
- Tegmark, M. (2003) "Parallel universes." *Scientific American* 288: 40–51.
- Tegmark, M. (2015) "Consciousness as a state of matter." *Chaos, Solitons, & Fractals* 76: 238–270. Available at <https://arxiv.org/abs/1401.1219> (accessed 11 September 2018).
- Teller, P. (2004) "What is a stance?" *Philosophical Studies* 121: 159–170.
- Tennyson, A. (1881) "Despair," reprinted in C. Blyth (ed.) *Decadent Verse: An Anthology of Late-Victorian Poetry, 1872–1900*. London: Anthem Press, 2009.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Tetlock, P. (2003) "Thinking the unthinkable: Sacred values and taboo cognitions." *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 7: 320–324.
- Thalos, M. (2016) *A Social Theory of Freedom*. London: Routledge.
- Thompson, M. (1995) "The representation of life," in R. Hursthouse, G. Lawrence, and W. Quinn (eds.) *Virtues and Reasons* Oxford: Clarendon, pp. 247–296.
- Thompson, M. (2008) *Life and Action: Elementary Structures of Practice and Practical Thought* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Thomson, G. (2003) *On the Meaning of Life*. South Melbourne: Wadsworth.
- Thomson, J. (1987) "Cathode rays." *Philosophical Magazine* 5: 293–316.
- Tillich, P. (1951) *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Tipler, F. (1995) *The Physics of Immortality: Modern Cosmology, God and the Resurrection of the Dead*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Toland, J. (1720) *Pantheisticon*. London: Samuel Peterson.
- Tolstoy, L. (1961) "A confession," in *Recollections and Essays*, trans. A. Maude. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tomlinson, J. (1991) *Cultural Imperialism: A Critical Introduction*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Tononi, G. (2008) "Consciousness as integrated information." *Biological Bulletin* 215: 216–242.
- Tooley, M. (2012) "Inductive logic and the probability that God exists: Farewell to sceptical theism," in J. Chandler and V. Harrison (eds.) *Probability in the Philosophy of Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 144–164.
- Tooley, M. (2015) "The problem of evil." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <https://platos.tanford.edu/entries/evil/> (accessed 17 November 2018).
- Tooley, M., Devine, P., Wolf-Devine, C., and Jaggar, A. (2009) *Abortion—Three Perspectives* ed. James Sterba. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Toscano, A. (2010) "Beyond abstraction: Marx and the critique of religion." *Historical Materialism: Research in Critical Marxist Theory* 18: 3–29.
- Transparency International (2010) *Corruption perceptions index*. Available at <https://www.transparency.org/cpi2010/results> (accessed 20 December 2018).
- Trenchard, J., and Gordon, T. (1721) *The Independent Whig*. London: J. Peele.
- Trenchard, J., and Gordon, T. (2009) *L'Esprit du clergé*, trans. P. d'Holbach. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger.
- Trenholm, B. (2007) "Impacts of four Title V section 510 'abstinence education programs.'" Report to Congress. Available at <https://aspe.hhs.gov/report/impacts-four-title-v-section-510-abstinence-education-programs> (accessed 25 September 2018).
- Trisel, B. A. (2012) "Intended and unintended life." *The Philosophical Forum* 43: 395–403.
- Troelstra, A., and van Dalen, D. (1988) *Constructivism in Mathematics: An Introduction*, Vol. 1. Amsterdam: North Holland.
- Tucker, C. (2011) "Phenomenal conservatism and evidentialism in religious epistemology," in K. Clark and R. VanArragon (eds.) *Evidence and Religious Belief*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 52–73.
- Turner, D. (1991) "Religion: Illusions and liberation," in T. Carver (ed.) *Companion to Marx*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 320–338.
- Tye, M. (1995) *Ten Problems of Consciousness: A Representational Theory of the Phenomenal Mind*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Tyler, G. (2013) *What Went Wrong: How the 1% Hijacked the American Middle Class ... and What Other Countries Got Right*. Dallas: BenBolla Books.
- United Nations (1948) *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Available at http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf (accessed 20 September 2018).

- United Nations (2008) *Human Development Report 2007/2008: Fighting Climate Change*. UNDP, New York: Routledge. Available at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/268/hdr_20072008_en_complete.pdf (accessed 25 September 2018).
- United Nations (2009) *Human development report 2009*. Table K: Gender empowerment measure and its components. New York: United Nations Development Program.
- United Nations (2016) "World Happiness Report 2016." Available at https://s3.amazonaws.com/happiness-report/2016/HR-V1_web.pdf (accessed 23 October 2018).
- Uslaner, E. (2002) *The Moral Foundations of Trust*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Van Dalen, D. (2001) "Intuitionistic logic," in L. Goble (ed.) *Blackwell Guide to Philosophical Logic*. Malden: Blackwell, pp. 224–257.
- Van Elk, M., Rutjens, B., van der Pligt, J., and van Harreveld, F. (2016) "Priming of supernatural agent concepts and agency detection." *Religion, Brain and Behaviour* 6: 4–33.
- Van Fraassen, B. (1980) *The Scientific Image*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Van Fraassen, B. (2002) *The Empirical Stance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Van Inwagen, P. (1996) "It is wrong, everywhere, always, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence," in J. Jordan and D. Howard-Snyder (eds.) *Faith, Freedom and Rationality*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 137–153.
- Van Roojen, M. (2015) *Metaethics: A Contemporary Introduction*. New York: Routledge.
- Vanzo, A. (2013) "Kant on empiricism and rationalism." *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 30: 53–74.
- Vercruysse, J. (1971) *Bibliographie descriptive des écrits du baron d'Holbach*. Paris: Lettres Modernes, Minard.
- Verweij, J., Ester, P., and Nauta, R. (1997) "Secularization as an economic and cultural phenomenon." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36: 309–324.
- Vogel, J. (1990) "Cartesian scepticism and inference to the best explanation." *Journal of Philosophy* 87: 658–666.
- Vogel, J. (2004) "Sceptical arguments." *Philosophical Issues* 14: 426–455.
- Voltaire (1997) *Correspondance choisie*. Paris: La Pochotèque.
- Wadia, A. (1965) "Philosophical implications of the doctrine of karma." *Philosophy East and West* 15: 145–152.
- Waghorn, N. (2015) "Metz's incoherence objection: Some epistemological considerations." *Journal of Philosophy of Life*, 5: 150–168.
- Wald, R. (1984) *General Relativity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Walker, L. (1989) "Religion and the meaning of life and death," in L. Pojman (ed.) *Philosophy: The Quest for Truth*. Belmont: Wadsworth, pp. 167–171.
- Wallace, M., et al. (2014) "Religious affiliation and hiring discrimination in the American South: A field experiment." *Social Currents* 1: 189–207.
- Ward, K. (1982) *Holding Fast to God: A Reply to Don Cupitt*. London: SPCK.
- Ward, K. (2006) *Is Religion Dangerous?* Oxford: Lion Hudson.
- Warfield, T. (2003) "Compatibilism and incompatibilism: Some arguments," in M. Loux and D. Zimmerman (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 613–630.
- Watkin, C. (2011) *Difficult Atheism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- WEF (2013) "*The Global Competitiveness Report 2012–2013*." World Economic Forum. Available at www.weforum.org/reports/global-competitiveness-report-2012-2013 (accessed 20 December 2018).
- Weinberg, S. (2008) "Without God." *New York Review of Books* 25 September. Reprinted in *Lake Views: This World and the Universe*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Weinberg, S. (2013) *Lectures on Quantum Mechanics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Weisman, J., and Cooperman, A. (2006) "A religious protest largely from the left: Conservative Christians say fighting cuts in poverty programs is not a priority." *Washington Post*, 14 December.
- Wellings, K., Collumbien, M., Slaymaker, E., Singh, S., Hodges, Z., Patel, D., and Bajos, N. (2006) "Sexual behaviour in context: A global perspective." *Lancet* 368:1706–1728.
- Wesley, J. (1796) *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, 8th edn. London: G. Whitfield.
- Wesley, J. (1853) "Sermon 115: On the discoveries of faith," "Sermon 105: On conscience," and "Sermon 117: The difference between walking by sight, and walking by faith," in *Sermons on Several Occasions*, Vol. 2, 11th edn. London: William Tegg and Co., pp. 489–495, pp. 454–461, pp. 501–508.
- West, C. (2011) "The confluence of education and children's spirituality in New South Wales." *Journal of Student Engagement: Education Matters*, 1: 11–20.
- West, D. (1957) *Eleven Lourdes Miracles*. London: Gerald Duckworth.
- Wexler, A. (1981) "Emma Goldman on Mary Wollstonecraft." *Feminist Studies* 7: 113–133.
- Whewell, W. (2001) *Of the Plurality of Worlds. A Facsimile of the First Edition of 1853: Plus Previously Unpublished Material Excised by the Author Just Before the Book Went to Press; and Whewell's Dialogue Rebutting His Critics, Reprinted from the Second Edition*, ed. M. Ruse. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Whitcomb, J., and Morris, H. (1961) *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and its Scientific Implications*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company.
- White, A. (1896) *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology within Christendom* New York: D. Appleton & Co. Reprinted in Great Minds series, Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1993.
- White, R. (2003) "The epistemic advantage of prediction over accommodation." *Mind* 112: 653–683.
- White, R. (2010) "You just believe that because" *Philosophical Perspectives* 24, 573–615.
- Wielenberg, E. (2005) *Value and Virtue in a Godless Universe*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Wielenberg, E. (2010) "On the evolutionary debunking of morality." *Ethics* 120: 441–464.
- Wielenberg, E. (2014) *Robust Ethics: The Metaphysics and Epistemology of Godless Normative Realism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wielenberg, E. (2016) "Evolutionary debunking arguments in religion and morality," in U. Leibowitz and N. Sinclair (eds.) *Explanation in Ethics and Mathematics: Debunking and Dispensability*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 83–102.
- Wielenberg, E. (2016) "Metz's case against supernaturalism." *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 8: 27–34.
- Wiggins, D. (1991) *Needs, Values, Truth: Essays in the Philosophy of Value*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wilkins, J. S., and Griffiths, P. E. (2013) "Evolutionary debunking arguments in three domains: Fact, value and religion," in G. Dawes and J. Maclaurin (eds.) *A New Science of Religion*. New York: Routledge, pp. 133–146.
- Wilkinson, R., and Pickett, K. (2009) *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*. London: Allen Lane.
- Williams, B. (1973) "The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the tedium of immortality," in *Problems of the Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 82–100.
- Williams, B. (1981) "Persons, character and morality," in *Moral Luck*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Williams, M. (1991) *Unnatural Doubts: Epistemological Realism and the Basis of Scepticism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Williamson, T. (1990) "Necessary identity and necessary existence," in R. Haller and J. Brandl (eds.) *Wittgenstein – Eine Neubewertung towards a Re-evaluation*. Berlin: Springer, pp. 168–175.
- Williamson, T. (1998) "Bare possibilia." *Erkenntnis* 48: 257–273.

- Williamson, T. (1999) "Existence and contingency." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume 73*: 181–203.
- Williamson, T. (2000). *Knowledge and Its Limits*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Williamson, T. (2002) "Necessary existents," in A. O'Hear (ed.) *Logic, Thought and Language*, Royal Institute of Philosophy Suppl. 51. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 233–251.
- Williamson, T. (2013) *Modal Logic as Metaphysics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Willis, A. (2014) *Toward a Humean True Religion: Genuine Theism, Moderate Hope, and Practical Morality*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Wilson, D. (2002) *Darwin's Cathedral: Evolution, Religion and the Nature of Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Winkleby, M., Cubbin, C., and Ahn, D. (2006) "Individual socioeconomic status, neighborhood socioeconomic status, and adult mortality." *American Journal of Public Health* 96: 2145–2153.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1953) *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. G. Anscombe and R. Rhees, trans. G. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1961) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. Pears and B. McGuinness. London: Routledge.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1966) *Wittgenstein's Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, ed. C. Barrett. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1969) *On Certainty*, ed. G. Anscombe and G. von Wright, trans. D. Paul and G. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wolf, S. (1997) "Meaningful lives in a meaningless world." *Quaestiones Infinitae*, Vol. 19. Utrecht: Utrecht University, pp. 1–22.
- Wolf, S. (2010) *Meaning in Life and Why It Matters*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Wollstonecraft, M. (1787) *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*. London: J. Johnson.
- Wollstonecraft, M. (1993) *A Vindication of the Rights of Men; A Vindication of the Rights of Woman; An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution*, ed. J. Todd. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wollstonecraft, M. (2013) *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, ed. I. Horricks. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press.
- Wolterstorff, N. (1997) "Why we should reject what liberalism tells us about speaking and acting in public for religious reasons," in P. Weithman (ed.) *Religion and Contemporary Liberalism* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Wolterstorff, N. (2007) "God is everlasting," in M. Peterson, W. Hasker, B. Reichenbach, and D. Basinger (eds.) *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*, 3rd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wolterstorff, N. (2008) *Justice; Rights and Wrongs*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Wolterstorff, N. (2012) *Understanding Liberal Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wolf, S. (2013) "US health in international perspective: Shorter lives, poorer health." *National Research Council and Institute of Medicine*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- Wright, C. (2004) "Warrant for nothing (and foundations for free)?" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 78 (Suppl.): 167–212.
- Yalçın, Ü. (1992) "Sceptical arguments from underdetermination." *Philosophical Studies* 68: 1–34.
- Yang, C. (1970) *Religion in Chinese Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ye, F. (2000) "Toward a constructive theory of unbounded linear operators." *Journal of Symbolic Logic* 65: 357–370.
- Yoder, J. (1994) *The Politics of Jesus*, 2nd edn. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Young, J. (2003) *The Death of God and the Meaning of Life*. New York: Routledge.
- Zagzebski, L. (2010) "Religious knowledge," in S. Bernecker and D. Pritchard (eds.) *Routledge Companion to Epistemology*. London: Routledge, pp. 393–400.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Zagzebski, L. (2011) "Epistemic self-trust and the Consensus Gentium argument," in K. Clark and R. Van Arragon (eds.) *Evidence and Religious Belief*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 22–36.
- Zagzebski, L. (2017) "Foreknowledge and freewill," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/free-will-foreknowledge/> (accessed 12 September 2018).
- Zimmerman, D. (2006) "Dualism in the philosophy of mind," in D. Borchert (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 3, 2nd edn. Detroit: Thomson Gale, pp. 113–122.
- Zuckerman, P. (2007) "Atheism: Contemporary numbers and patterns," in M. Martin (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 47–65.
- Zuckerman, P. (2008) *A Society Without God: What the Least Religious Nations can tell us about Contentment*. New York: New York University Press.
- Zuckerman, P. (2009) "Atheism, secularity, and well-being: How the findings of social science counter negative stereotypes and assumptions." *Sociology Compass* 3: 949–971.
- Zuckerman, P. (2014) *Living the Secular Life*. New York: Penguin.
- Zuckerman, P., and Shook, J. (eds.) (2017) *The Oxford Handbook of Secularism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Index

Page numbers in *italics* refer to Figures and **bold** refer to Tables

- Aboriginal stories, 106
Adams, John and “hens that crow”, 79
Adams, Robert, 496
afterlife, 131, 196, 263, 429–430, 513
 God and meaning, 356, 357
 metaethics, 344, 348
 normative objections to theism, 207–210
 prudential objections to theism, 219–223, 226, 228
 religion and justification of violence 428, 432
 religion and morality, 426
 religion and violence, 426, 428, 429–430, 432
 Russell, 83, 86, 91, 94
 Sartre, 128
 Stanton, 72
 Wollstonecraft, 62, 66, 67
agnosticism, 3–7, 105, 119, 250, 278, 283, 356
 evidential objections to atheism, 481, 482
 evidential objections to theism, 192, 196
 evolution, 332, 338
 Holbach, 36–40
 Hume, 17
 Ingersoll, 81
 Marx, 43
 methods and science, 291–292, 298, 300
 normative objections to atheism, 492–493, 503
 normative skepticism, 372, 375
 postmodernism, 147, 148–149
 prudential objections to theism, 216–219, 221–222
 Russell, 84, 86, 92
Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), 298, 300
alienation, 43–46, 50
Alston, W., 484, 485
Amir, Yigal, 431
Anderson, D., 206
Andersson, Stefan, 93
Ano, G., and E. Vasconcelles, 512
Anscombe, G. E. M. (Elizabeth), 346
Anselmian theism, 477, 487
Anthony, Susan B., 72, 74–75, 78–80
 The Revolution, 75–76, 79
anti-theism, 5, 224
Aquinas, Thomas, 332, 430
Aristotle, 99, 139, 262, 391, 424, 454
 De Anima, 325–326
 evolution, 323, 325–326
 naturalism, 154–156, 158
 On the Heavens, 197
 pragmatism, 112, 117
ascetic atheism, 141, 145, 148

- atheism, 3–11, 22, 171–172, 188, 277–280, 406–409, 437
 - advantage, 407–411
 - ascetic, 141, 145, 148
 - belief as evidential objection, 479–483
 - benefit of theism, 511–513
 - characterization, 3–6
 - Classical Logical Consequence, 455, 460
 - classical logic to necessitism, 460–466
 - defense, 33–35
 - definitions and assumptions, 492–494
 - divine command theory, 495–497
 - education, 383–384, 389–390, 392–393
 - empiricism as a stance, 105
 - evidential objections, 476–487
 - evidential objections to theism, 191–192, 196, 201
 - evolution, 323, 328, 331–333, 337–338
 - existentialism, 123–124, 127, 129, 132, 136
 - free will, 245, 246
 - global and local forms, 476–483, 485–487
 - God and meaning, 355–358, 360–362, 364
 - Holbach, 28–40
 - hostilities, 404, **405**, 405, **406**, 411–412
 - human dignity, 499–500
 - Hume, 15–26
 - imitative, 141–143, 148
 - intellectual, 34–35, 39–40
 - logical monism, 451–456
 - logical objections, 451–468, 471
 - Marx, 43, 45–48, 52–54
 - metaethics, 343–354
 - methods of science, 291–296, 298–301
 - moral arguments for belief in God, 500–502
 - moral arguments for God's existence, 494–500
 - moral error theory, 351–353, 354
 - moral knowledge, 498–499
 - necessitism, 460–468
 - normative objections, 491–503
 - Pascal's wager, 513–517
 - postmodernism, 138–149
 - pragmatism, 119–122, 456–460
 - prudential objections, 506–517
 - prudential objections to theism, 216–229
 - reasons for belief, 507–511
 - religion and morality, 425–427
 - religious experience, 483–487
 - Russell, 84–86, 92–94
 - skepticism, 5, 277–284, 286, 372
 - societal success, 396, 397, 398, 399–402, 403, 404–414
 - Stanton, 72, 80, 81
 - supernatural, 250–251, 253–254, 258–259
 - validity proof of argument, 471
 - violence, 425–428, 432
 - weak naturalism, 253–254
 - wish for God to exist, 502–503
 - Wollstonecraft, 58–60, 62, 63–67, 69
- Atheist's wager, 221
- atomism, 323, 326
- Audi, Robert, 350–351
- Augustine, 240
 - evolution, 325, 333, 335, 337
- Avalos, H., 421
- Avezac-Lavigne, Charles, 29
- Avogadro's number, 101
- axiological normative claims, 306–307
- Ayer, A. J., 171, 174, 185–186
 - Language, Truth, and Logic*, 171, 185–186
- Badiou, Alain, 138–139, 143–148
- Baier, Kurt, 363
 - "The Meaning of Life", 363
- Barruel, Abbé, 33
- Barth, Karl, 332
- Bartha, P., 514
- Batson, D., and W. Ventis, 427
- Bauer, Bruno, 48, 50, 52
- Bayard, Edward, 72
- Bayesianism, 102, 193, 293–295, 296, 300
- Beall, J. C., and Greg Restall, 453, 454, 456, 459
- Beauvoir, Simone de, 68, 127
- Becker, Ernest, 125, 126
- Beecher, Henry Ward, 332
- Bellah, Robert, 142–143
- benevolence of God, 22–23, 105, 201, 464, 477, 479
 - Hume, 17–19, 22–23
 - logical objections to theism, 173, 175
 - prudential objections to theism, 216, 219, 223, 226
 - Wollstonecraft, 61, 63, 66, 68

- Bergier, Nicolas Sylvestre, 32
- Berkeley, George, 37, 317, 318–319
 death of son, 264–265
Principles of Human Knowledge, 317
- Bernauer, James, 142
- Besthorn, Rudolf, 31
- Betenson, Toby, 208
- Big Bang theory, 154, 197, 221
- Big Gods, 426
- Billinge, H., 457
- bin Laden, Osama, 430
- Blackburn, Simon, 499
- Blackstone, William
Commentaries on the Laws of England, 76
- Blackwell, Henry
Woman's Journal, 79
- Blake, Lillie Devereux, 78, 79
- Blake, William, 61
- blind realism, 117–118
- Boethius, A., 179
- Botting, E., 68
- Boulanger, Nicolas-Antoine, 31, 32
- Bourne, Samuel, 32
- Boyle, Robert, 326–327
Disquisition About the Final Causes of Natural Things, 326
- Bradley, B., 454
- Bramhall, Bishop, 240
- Brandon, Robert, 111
- Bridges, Douglas S., 456, 457
- Brighthouse, H., 385
- Brightman, Edgar Sheffield, 90–91
- Brissot, Jacques Pierre, 63–64
- Brouwer, L. E. J., 458
- Brueckner, A., 479
- Buddhism, 83, 162, 332, 335, 430
- Burgess, J., 456
- Burke, Edmund
Thoughts on the Revolution in France, 61
- Byerly, Ryan, 211
- Byrne, C., 390
- Calhoun, Dominick, 205, 206, 208, 209–210, 212
- Callahan, J., 263
- Calvin, John, 107, 479, 480, 483, 486
- Cam, Philip, 385, 393
- Camus, Albert, 357, 502
- Cantor, Georg, 144
- capitalism, 44, 51, 401, 407, 408
- Capra, Frank
 “It’s a Wonderful Life” (film), 134
- Caputo, John D., 148
- Carnap, Rudolf, 291–292, 299, 305
 “Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology”, 299
 logical objections to atheism, 451, 452, 456
- Cartesians, 36, 116, 318, 326, 372
see also Descartes, René
- Cashmore, Anthony, 241
- Catt, Carry Chapman, 78, 79
- cause of order in the universe, 15–18, 21, 22–23
- Cavanaugh, W., 423
- charitable giving, 51, 91, 426, 491
 societal success, 407, 408, 413
- chemistry, 30, 155, 158, 159
- Chisholm, Roderick, 212
- Christensen, D., 482
- Christianity, 5–6, 222, 253–254, 294, 332–334, 356
 education, 384, 385, 388, 390
 empiricism, 105, 106–107
 evidentialism, 316, 320, 321
 evidential objections to atheism, 477–478, 481, 484, 486–487
 evidential objections to theism, 191–192, 196, 198–199, 202
 evil, 334–335
 evolution, 325–326, 328–329, 331–338
 existentialism, 128, 129, 142
 hostilities, 405
 Marx, 50, 52, 53
 normative objections to atheism, 493, 500
 normative objections to theism, 213
 normative skepticism, 370, 373
 postmodernism, 139, 141–147
 priority of public reason, 443
 religious experience, 486–487
 Russell, 83–86, 90, 92–94
 societal success, 400–402, 405, 409, 412, 414
 Stanton, 71, 73, 76
 tolerance and intolerance, 427–428
 violence, 421–422, 427–430
 Wollstonecraft, 58, 60–66, 68–69
- Christie, Thomas, 63

- church and state, 436–444
 - political justification, 436–442
 - priority of public reason, 443–444
- Church-Fitch knowability, 458
- Churchich, Nicholas
 - Marxism and Alienation*, 50
- Churchland, Patricia, 160
- Cicero, 479, 480
- Clark, K., and J. Barrett, 483
- Clarke, Samuel, 19, 33, 37–39
- Clarke, Steve
 - The Justification of Religious Violence*, 424, 428
- classical first-order logic (CFOL), 451–452
- classical logic, 451–456, 459, 460–463
- classical logical consequence, 455–460
- classical propositional logic (CPL), 451–452
- classical quantified modal logic (CQML), 452–453, 454, 462
- Clavel, Maurice, 142
- Clifford, W. K., 304–306, 308, 310–311, 502, 508
 - “The Ethics of Belief”, 304, 308, 508
- Clintock, Mary Ann, 73
- closure principle for rational belief, 279–280, 281–282
- coercion, 238, 240, 344
 - church and state, 436–441, 443–444
- Colby, Clara, 78, 79
- Colyvan, M., 517
- Combe, George
 - Constitution of Man*, 72
- common consent, 476–477, 479–483, 487
- communal inquiry, 386–387
 - education, 383, 385–387, 390, 392–394
- communism, 5, 83, 401, 404, 413–414, 422
 - Marx, 49, 55
- compatibilism, 183, 206–207, 237–238, 240, 245–246
- computer science, 158–160, 161
- Comte, August, 81
- Conan-Doyle, Sir Arthur and Sherlock Holmes, 327, 331
- Condorcet, Nicolas de Caritat Marquis de, 63–64
 - Sketch of the Progress of Humanity*, 62
 - Sketch of the Progress of Human Reason*, 64
- Condorcet, Sophie de Grouchy Marquise de, 64
- Conee, Earl, 304, 306–307, 314–315
- consciousness, 160, 161, 253, 310
 - Marx, 43, 46, 49, 50, 52, 54
 - Russell, 87
 - Sartre, 142
- Consensus Gentium, 477, 479–483, 487
- Constantine, 202
- constructivism, 457–459, 486–487, 499
- contrastive empiricism, 296–299, 300
- converse Barcan formula (CBF), 462
- Copernicus, 326
- Copleston, Frederick, 84
- Cornell realism, 350, 375
- Cosmic Design Arguments, 159
- cosmic war, 428–429, 432
- cosmology, 17–18, 104–105, 196–198, 199
 - Hume, 17–18
 - naturalism, 153, 158–159
- Craig, William Lane, 107
- Crane, Tim, 463
- Crawford, K., 394
- creationism, 311, 325, 388, 390, 402
 - see also* Young Earth Creationism
- crime, 407, 422
 - societal success, 397, 399, 402, 405, 412
- Cult of Reason, 64–67
- Cult of the Supreme Being, 64–66
- d'Aine, Basile-Geneviève-Suzanne, 28
- d'Aine, Charlotte, 28
- d'Aine, Jean-Baptiste Nicolas, 28–29
- d'Aine (née Westenburg), Suzanne, 28–29
- Dalai Lama, 430
- Daltonian theory, 424
- Daly, Mary, 80
 - The Church and the Second Sex*, 80
- Darnton, Robert, 32
- Darwin, Charles, 104, 198–199, 329–332, 409
 - evolution, 295, 323, 328–338, 498
 - evolution debunking arguments, 374
 - On the Origin of Species*, 26, 198, 328–329, 331–332
 - Russell, 88–89
- Darwin, Erasmus, 329
- Daubenton, Louis-Jean-Marie, 30
- Davidson, Donald, 117
- Davisson, John, 32
- Dawkins, Richard, 336–337, 423, 427
 - evil, 334–335
 - evolution, 323, 331, 334–338

- Hume, 25–26
 prudential objections to theism, 219–220, 222, 227
The Blind Watchmaker, 323
- death, 124–126, 262–273, 308–310
 existentialism, 123, 124–126, 127, 129–131
 posthumous harm, 263–268
 posthumous wrongs, 268–271
 rationality and posthumous events, 272–273
 recalcitrant intuitions, 271–272
- deflationism, 257–258
- degrees of assent, 304–306, 310, 312–314
- deism, 119, 298, 332–333
- Dembski, William, 26
- Democritus, 323
- deontological normative claims, 306–307
- DeRose, Keith, 318
 “Ought We to Follow Our Evidence”, 318
- Derrida, 138–139, 146–149
On Touching, 148
- Descartes, René, 127, 158, 181, 241, 326
 Holbach, 33, 36
 Marx, 47
- Design Argument
 Hume, 16, 18, 20, 23, 25–26
 Russell, 85, 88–89
- determinism, 192, 237–240, 245, 246
 death, 265–266
- Dewey, John, 383, 386, 389
 pragmatism, 111, 113, 116, 118, 120
- d'Holbach, Baron
System of Nature, 47
- d'Holbach, Franz Adam, 28
- Dickens, Charles, 328–329
Hard Times, 329
- Diderot, Denis, 28–33
Encyclopedia, 28, 30–31
- digital polytheism, 160
- Diller, J., 477, 478
- Disraeli, Benjamin, 77
- divine command theory (DCT), 344–345, 349, 353, 354
 normative objections to atheism, 495–497
 religion and morality, 425–426
- divine foreknowledge, 177–179
- divine hiddenness, 183–185, 195–196, 200
 evidential objections to atheism, 477, 487
- divine immaterialism, 34, 36, 38
- divine personhood, 170, 179–180
- divine simplicity, 170, 174–177
- dogmatic naturalism, 152–154, 156, 161–162
- Dostoevsky, Fyodor, 335
- Dougherty, T., and C. Tweedt, 479
- doxastic practices, 3, 107, 217, 377
 evidentialism, 304–305, 307, 312
 evidential objections to atheism, 484–485
 involuntarism, 314, 510–511
 prudential objections to atheism, 510–511
- Draper, Paul, 319
- Drummond, Henry, 199
- dualism, 53, 73, 107, 161, 241–242, 252
- Dubois, Ellen, 80
- Duhem, Pierre, 101, 292, 301
- Dummett, Michael, 254, 458
- Dumsday, T., 485
- Duncan, C., 513
- Easwaran, K., 482
- Eddington, Arthur Stanley, 296–297
- education, 383–394, 482
 communal inquiry, 383, 385–387, 390, 392–394
 ethics, 383, 384–386, 390–393
 special religious, 383, 384–386, 387–390
- Edwards, Johnathan, 71
- Einstein, Albert, 102, 295, 296, 453, 465
 God and meaning, 360, 361
- Ellerton, P., 388
- Empirical Materialism, 34–36, 38
- empiricism, 99–108, 292–293, 300, 375, 437, 442, 480
 as doctrine, 99–105
 as stance, 102–103, 105
 contrastive, 296–299, 300
 evidence, 304, 307, 320
 faith as a source of knowledge, 107–108
 James, 115, 121
 logical objections to atheism, 455, 466, 468
 metaethics, 350, 351, 352
 naturalism, 155, 156
 normative objections to atheism, 491, 500, 501
 religious implications, 103–107
 social success, 407, 411, 413
- Engels, Friedrich, 45

Enlightenment

- Holbach, 28, 29, 31, 33
- Wollstonecraft, 62, 64, 66

Enoch, David, 498

epistemic parity argument, 285–286

epistemological normative skepticism, 368

epistemology, 10–11, 158, 393, 438

- dualism, 107

- evidence, 303–321

- evidential objections to atheism, 46, 480–485

- evidential objections to theism, 192, 194

- evolution, 323–338

- Holbach, 39

- Hume, 19, 23, 24, 25

- logical objections to atheism, 467, 468

- Marx, 43, 47, 52

- metaethics, 349, 351

- methods of science, 291–301

- normative objections to atheism, 496, 502

- normative skepticism, 367–371, 374–375, 377

- pragmatism, 113, 117, 118, 120

- prudential objections to atheism, 506–511, 513

- prudential objections to theism, 217, 227

- skepticism, 277–286

error theories, 263, 271–273

- moral, 351–353, 354

- normative skepticism, 368–369

ethical hedonism, 34, 36

ethics, 100, 208, 310–311, 442

- education, 383, 384–386, 387, 389, 390–393

- meaning, 355–364

- normative skepticism, 367–377

- Russell, 84, 89–90

- see also* metaethics

Euclid, 102, 156, 158

Euthyphro problem, 425, 495

evidence and evidentialism, 9–10, 303–321

- alternative views, 306–307

- defined, 304

- degrees of assent and logical probability, 304–306

- ethics of belief, 310–311

- Hume, 16, 17, 20, 22–25

- miracles, 23–24, 311, 319–321

- moral principles, 306

- normative principles, 307–310

- preliminary formulation, 312–313

- revised formulation, 315–316

- serious objection, 314–319

- theistic belief, 319–321

- unsound objections, 313–314

- evil, 105, 170, 173, 182–183, 212–213, 429, 334–335

- evidential objections to atheism, 477, 479, 485

- gratuitous, 200–201

- normative objections to theism, 205–206, 209, 211–213

- normative skepticism, 372, 373

- Russell, 87

- evolution, 2, 198, 199, 295, 311, 323–338, 422–423

- before Darwin, 328–329

- Christianity, 325–326, 328–329, 331, 332–334, 335–338

- Darwin, 295, 323, 328–338, 498

- education, 390

- Greek philosophy, 323–326

- issues in need of resolution, 334–337

- modern science, 326–328

- naturalism, 154, 159

- normative objections to atheism, 497–499

- normative skepticism, 372–376

- Russell, 85, 88–89

- societal success, 397, 401–402, 403, 404

- evolutionary debunking arguments (EDAs), 373–374, 498

- normative skepticism, 367–377

- theism and normative realism, 372–377

- exclusivism, 436–437, 507

- prudential objections to atheism, 506–511

- existentialism, 123–136

- death, 123, 124–126, 127, 129–131

- human history, 126–129

- logic of meaning, 129–133

- meaning, 123–135, 136

- meaning objectivism, 133–136

- permanence, 133

- Sartre, 127–128, 134, 138, 141, 142

- explanatory requirement, 366–367

- extinction, 89, 198, 200–201

- extreme value theorem (EVT), 458

- faith, 173, 219–220, 357, 359
 as a source of knowledge, 104, 107–108
 evolution, 329, 332
 existentialism, 123–124, 127, 131
 Hume, 22
 Russell, 83–86, 91, 93, 94
 Stanton, 72–73, 81
 Wollstonecraft, 58, 60–61, 64–65, 68
 faith healing, 320
 Falkenstein, Lorne, 18
 fallibilism, 102, 112, 116–118
 falsificationism, 185–188
 Family of Fire, 162
 fascism, 5
 fatalism, 265
 Feinberg, Joel, 263–264, 266–268
 Feldman, Richard, 304, 306, 307, 314–315
 feminism, 8
 Stanton, 73, 79–81
 Wollstonecraft, 59, 67, 68, 69
 Feuerbach, Ludwig, 45, 48–49, 53
 The Essence of Christianity, 45
 fideism, 277, 284–286
 Field, Hartry, 452, 453
 finitude and finitism, 125, 144
 Finney, Rev. Charles Grandson, 71
 First Cause Argument, 22, 39, 88, 89
 Fisher, C. M., 241
 Fitelson, Branden, 305
 Fitzgerald, Maureen, 80
 Flew, Antony, 186–188
 “*Theology and Falsification*”, 186
 Fordyce, James, 65
 formalization, 155–156, 161
 Foucault, Michel, 138, 141–143, 146,
 148–149
 The Archaeology of Knowledge, 142
 The Order of Things, 142
 Franklin, Ben, 119
 Frederic II of Prussia, 32
 freedom, 237–246
 neuroscience and the supernatural,
 240–246
 philosophical background, 237–240
 free first-order logics (FFOL), 452–453
 free quantified modal logic (FQML), 454
 free will, 105, 206–208, 237–246
 logical objections to theism, 177–178,
 181–183
 naturalism, 157, 161
 pragmatism, 114, 118
 Russell, 85
 French Revolution, 29, 33, 58, 65, 68–69
 Freud, Sigmund, 223, 224
 The Future of an Illusion, 223
 Fricker, M., 480–481
 fundamentalism, 4–5, 10

 Gage, Matilda, 80
 Galen, L., and J. Kloet, 397
 Galiani, Abbé, 29
 Garrett, Don, 20
 Garson, J., 462
 Gassendi, Pierre, 479
 Gates, Bill, 269
 Gaylor, Annie Laurie, 75, 81
 Women Without Superstition, 81
 Gazzaniga, Michael, 241, 245
 Geach, Peter, 181
 Gellman, J., 486
 Gellmann, J., 479
 Gellner, Ernst, 99
 general religious education (GRE), 383–384,
 389–90
 general theory of relativity (GTR), 295,
 296, 465
 Genlis, Madame de, 59, 63
 George, Alexander, 24
 Gilman, Charlotte Perkins, 78
 Girondins, 63–64, 66
 Godwin, William, 59–63, 67
 *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of
 the Rights of Woman*, 59–60
 Goldman, Alvin, 314–315
 Goldman, Emma, 67–68
 Gordon, Ann, 72
 Selected Papers, 79
 Gordon, Thomas, 32
 L'Esprit du clergé, 32
 Gould, Stephen Jay, 336, 337
 Grand Troy Revival (1831), 71
 Gray, Asa, 333
 Green, Horace L., 79
 Free Thought Magazine, 79, 81
 Greenspan, Louis, 93
 Gregory, John, 65
 Griffin, Nicholas, 93
 Griffiths, Elizabeth, 80
 Grimbé, Angelina, 73
 Grimbé, Sarah, 73, 77, 81

- Hägglund, Martin, 148
Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Times of Life, 148
- Hahn, Hans, 291–292
- Hájek, A., 514
- Hand, M. 388–389
- happiness, 130, 350, 357, 396–415,
497, 500
atheism and societal success, 406–413
atheistic advantage, 407–409, 410,
410–411
conflicts, **405, 406**
Holbach, 33–36, 39, 40
Hume, 19–20
Marx, 50
Pascal's wager, 513–517
personal situation, 397
pragmatism, 114, 119
prudential objections to atheism, 508–509,
512–517
religiosity and socioeconomics, 398, 399,
402, 403, 404, 405
Russell, 89–90, 92
societal situation, 397–406
theistic disadvantage, 411–413
- Hardy, Thomas, 331
- Hare, John, 501
- Hare, R. M., 187
- Harman, G., 293
- Hasker, William, 209, 212
- Hauerwas, S., 432
- Hawking, Stephen, and Roger Penrose, 457
- Hegel, G. W., 19, 46–47, 52, 85
Philosophy of Right, 52, 53
- Heidegger, Martin, 126–127, 138–141, 142,
144, 146, 148
“The Word of Nietzsche: God is
Dead”, 139
- Hellman, Geoffrey, 451, 457
- Henry, Josephine, 79
- Herbrand, J., 452
- Hick, John, 186
- hiddenness argument, 183–185
see also divine hiddenness
- Hilbert, David, 158, 456
- Hinduism, 106, 319, 412, 430,
477–478, 486
religious education, 389
Rg Veda, 196
- Hitchens, Christopher, 83, 224–225
- Hitler, Adolf, 369, 422
- Hobbes, Thomas, 58, 157, 158
- Hoffm, J., and G. Rosenkrantz, 182
- Holbach, Paul Henri Thiry d', 28–40
Art de la Verrerie, 31
Christianity Unveiled, 31
De l'Imposture sacerdotale, 32
Encyclopedia, 28, 30–31
Good Sense in Nature, 33, 38–39
System of Nature, 31, 32–33
The Sacred Contagion, 31
- Holden, Tom, 18, 22
- Homer, 115
- Hubble, Edwin, 255
- human dignity, 499–500
- Hume, David, 8, 15–26, 100, 114, 202,
369, 466
A Treatise of Human Nature, 19
*An Enquiry Concerning Human
Understanding*, 19, 304, 320
Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion,
15–16, 18, 20–23, 319, 327
divine benevolence, 17–19, 22–23
evidentialism, 304–307, 319–320
evolution, 327, 328, 331
guest of Holbach, 29
Natural History of Religion, 17, 18, 20, 21
objections to theism, 202, 219
“Of Miracles”, 25
“Of Superstition and Enthusiasm”, 20
Russell, 88
- Hunt, Jane, 73
- Huxley, Thomas Henry, 332
- hypothetico-deductivism, 295–296, 300
- imitative atheism, 141–143, 148
- inclusivism, 506, 507, 508–511, 513–517
- incompatibilism, 237–238, 240, 246
- increasing domains principle, 462
- individualism, 209–212, 357
- indoctrination, 383, 385, 387–389, 393
- inference of the best explanation (IBE),
293–295
- infinitude, 18
- Ingersoll, Robert, 81
- innocence, 3–4
- intellectual atheism, 34–35, 39–40
- intellectual hedonism, 34, 35, 39–40
- intelligent design, 85, 154, 333, 388, 390
Hume, 23, 26

- intuition and intuitionism, 100, 102,
350–351, 508–509
logical objections to atheism, 452–453,
456, 458–459
- Inwagen, Peter Van, 305
- Islam *see* Muslims and Islam
- Jacobins, 63, 66
- James, William, 305, 313, 481, 511, 513
pragmatism, 111, 113–116, 118–122
Varieties of Religious Experience, 121, 483
- Jefferson, Thomas, 119, 219
- Jews and Judaism, 191–192, 202, 356, 401,
431, 481, 500
evolution, 333, 335, 338
Marx, 52–53
normative skepticism, 370, 373
postmodernism, 145, 147
religious education, 389
Stanton, 79
violence, 422, 429, 431
- John Paul II, Pope, 107, 334
- Johnson, D., 426
- Johnson, Joseph, 53, 59, 61, 63
- Jones, Jim, 429
- Josephson, J., and S. Josephson, 293
- Joyce, Richard, 374
- judicial review, 441–442, 443, 444
- Juergensmeyer, M., 421
- Kalām Cosmological Argument, 159
- Kane, Robert, 240, 246
- Kant, Immanuel, 101, 313, 391, 491,
499–503
evolution, 327–328
moral argument, 491, 499–501
- karma, 430
- Kaufmann, Walter, 310
- Kelly, T., 480, 483
- Kent, Rev. Alexander, 79
- Kern, Kathi, 78
Mrs. Stanton's Bible, 76
- Kierkegaard, Søren, 127, 128, 129, 136,
332, 503
- Kimball, C., 421
- Kitcher, Philip, 374, 485
- knowledge-first principle, 478–479
- Knox, John, 328
- Koenig, H. 512
- Kohl, Marvin, 91
- Kornblith, Hilary, 314, 315
- Kors, Alan, 29, 34–38
- Krauss, Laurence, 222
- Kretzmann, Norman
“Eternity”, 180
- Kuhn, Thomas, 101
- Kwan, K., 486
- Lakatos, Imre, 101, 106
- Lamarckism, 331
- Laplace, Pierre Simon, 199
Exposition du Système du Monde, 199
- Law, S., 390, 392
- legacy, 124, 132
- Leibniz, G. W., 19, 99, 227, 153, 158
- Leucippus, 323
- Levenbook, B., 263
- Lewis, C.I., 111, 115, 116, 118
- libertarianism, 105, 157, 181, 207,
238–240, 245–246
- Libet, Benjamin, 240, 241
- life expectancy, 300–400, 402, 405,
512–513
- Lipman, Mathew, 385
- Lipton, F., 293
- locality, 196
- Locke, John, 25, 99–100, 108, 304–307
An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,
100, 304
- logical consequence schema (LCS), 453–456
pragmatic case, 456–460
- logical monism, 451–456
- logical positivism, 291–292
- logical probability, 304–305, 312–313, 319
- Lorentz, Hendrik, 453, 465
- Lovejoy, A. O., 111
- Lovering, Rob, 210–211
- Lucretius, 323–325
De rerum natura, 323–324
On the Nature of Things, 272
- Luhrmann, T. A., 484
- Luper, Steven, 263, 266
- Lycan, W., 293
- Mackie, J. L., 182–183, 349–350, 351, 501
- Madison, James, 119
- Maimonides, M., 177
- Maitzen, Stephen, 200, 209
“Normative Objections to Theism”, 200
- Malament, D., 465

- Malebranch, Nicolas, 33, 36
 Malesherbes, Lamoignon de, 31
 Malle, Bertram, 242, 244
 Malthus, Thomas Robert, 329–330
 Manicheanism, 429
 Maréchal, Sylvain
 Dictionnaire des athées, 33
 Martin, Michael, 220, 221
 Marx, Karl, 43–54, 141, 147
 Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, 52, 53
 “Estranged Labour”, 44
 On the Jewish Question, 52–53
 “Opium of the People”, 49–52
 “Private Property and Communism”, 49
 Master Argument, 277–280, 282–284
 materialism, 4, 72
 Holbach, 31–34
 Marx, 45, 46–47, 50
 mathematics, 2, 112, 169, 176, 183
 empiricism, 100–104
 logical objections to atheism, 452–453, 455–459, 463
 naturalism, 153–160
 postmodernism, 144, 145
 Russell, 85
 Mawson, T., 209, 210
 Maxentius, 202
 McClintock, Elizabeth, 75
 McGinn, Colin, 222, 224
 McGrew, T., and L. McGrew, 478
 Mead, G. H., 111, 115
 meaning, 136, 227, 228, 355–364
 clarifying debate, 356–358
 existentialism, 123–136
 God as detracting, 363–364
 God as enhancing, 361–362
 God as necessary, 358–359
 God as not necessary, 359–361
 objectivism, 133–136
 memorial existentialism, 132–133
 Mendelian genetics, 331
 Merincourt, Theroigne de, 63
 metaethics, 343–354, 359
 atheism and moral error theory, 351–353, 354
 moral knowledge, 349–351, 352, 354
 moral objectivity, 344–345, 350
 normativity, 345–349, 352
 metaphysics, 138–145, 147–149, 371, 426
 contrastive empiricism, 298–299
 death, 262–273
 evolution, 326
 Foucault, 143
 freedom, 237–246
 God and meaning, 358–359
 Holbach, 33
 logical objections to atheism, 454–455, 458, 460, 462, 466
 logical positivism, 292
 Marx, 46
 naturalism, 485–486
 Nietzsche, 138–141
 normative objections to atheism, 498–500
 prudential objections to theism, 218–219, 227
 supernatural, 250–259
 methodological naturalism, 251
 Mill, John Stuart, 88, 391, 496
 Subjection of Woman, 75
 Miller, B., 176
 miracles, 17, 23–25, 161, 478, 498
 evidentialism, 23–24, 311, 319–321
 evolution, 332, 334
 supernatural, 253–254
 Mittag, Daniel, 314
 monotheism, 3, 18, 250–251, 355, 356
 evidential objections, 191–192, 195, 201–202
 normative skepticism, 371, 373
 Monroe, Andrew, 242, 244
 Montague, P. Read, 241, 242
 moral arguments, 491, 494–500
 practical, 500–502
 moral error theory, 351–353, 354
 moral knowledge, 349–351, 352, 354, 498–499
 moral objectivity, 344–345, 350
 moral obligations, 209–212, 495–497, 498
 metaethics, 344–347, 350, 352, 353
 moral principles, 90, 306–308, 310, 313, 345, 496
 education, 391, 393
 moral rationalism, 346–348, 352, 354
 moral realism, 344–345, 350–354
 education, 390–393
 normative objections to atheism, 494, 497, 499, 501

- moral truths, 373, 390, 426, 495, 498–499
 metaethics, 343, 345, 349–351, 353–354
 Moravec, H., 159
 Morgan, Lloyd, 89
 Morrell, Lady Ottoline, 93
 Morris, Simon Conway, 337
 Mott, James, 73
 Mott, Lucretia, 73–74, 77, 81
 Muenning, P., and S. Glied, 407
 murder, 266–267
 Mure, William, 22
 Murray, Michael, 185
 Muslims and Islam, 7, 107, 412, 431, 481
 afterlife, 196, 222, 429
 evidential objections to theism, 191–192, 196, 198
 evolution, 333
 headscarf ban, 443
 Marx, 52
 normative skepticism, 370, 373
 religious education, 389
 terrorism, 404, 405

 Nadelhoffer, Thomas, 243–245
 Nagel, Thomas, 224, 226, 229
 Nahmias, Eddy, 242
 Naigeon, Jacques-André, 29–34
 Nancy, Jean-Luc, 138–139, 143–149
 Deconstruction of Christianity, 143
 Napoleon Bonaparte, 199, 328
 Nash, R., 389
 National American Women Suffrage Association (NAWSA), 78–80
 natural selection, 113, 154, 198, 241, 329–336, 374
 Russell, 85, 88–89
 nature and naturalism, 4, 126, 152–162, 251–253, 300, 451
 abstract sciences, 158–159
 attractive consequences of formalism, 156–157
 concrete sciences, 159–160
 contrastive empiricism, 298
 dogmatic and progressive, 152–153
 evidential objections to atheism, 476, 483, 485–487
 evidential objections to theism, 195, 202
 formalization, 155–156
 free will, 237–241, 245, 246

 God and meaning, 357–361
 Holbach, 32–39
 Hume, 15–16, 17–20, 22, 23–24, 26
 inference to the best explanation, 293–294
 logical objections to atheism, 463–468
 logical objections to theism, 174, 182
 Marx, 44–49
 metaethics, 344, 348–349, 351
 methodological, 251
 mind, 160–161
 normative objections to atheism, 494, 499
 normative objections to theism, 205–207
 normative skepticism, 377
 ontological, 251–254, 256–258
 pragmatism, 112–117, 119–120
 property of theories, 154–155
 prudential objections to theism, 224–228
 religious, 161–162
 Russell, 85, 87, 91
 supernatural 251–254, 256, 257–259
 Wollstonecraft, 60, 62
 Naumann, Manfred, 31
 Naville, Pierre, 31
 Nayding, I., 511
 necessitism, 452, 454, 456, 460–468
 negative-free logic, 453, 462–463
 Neglected Argument, 116, 120–121
 Neurath, Otto, 291–292
 neuroscience, 193–194, 237, 240–246
 neutral-free logic, 452, 462–463
 new coordination problem, 465–466
 Newman, John Henry, 285–286, 332, 334
 Grammar of Assent, 286
 new phenomenon of coordination (NPC), 451, 466–467, 471
 Newton, Sir Isaac, 7, 33, 58, 104, 296
 evolution, 326, 327
 naturalism, 155–156, 158
 Principia, 199
 Nickell, Joe, 320
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 138, 139–141, 142, 148
 The Gay Science, 138
 nihilism, 4–5, 227–228, 375
 existentialism, 124, 130–133
 Nile, Rev. Fred, 385
 Noddings, N., 392
 Nolen, William A., 320
 non-cognitivism, 352–353, 354, 369

INDEX

- Norenzayan, A., 426
 normative principles, 307–310, 312
 normative realism, 367, 369, 370–377
 evolutionary debunking, 373–377
 normative skepticism, 367–377
 characterizing, 368–369
 evolutionary debunking, 372–377
 implausible consequences, 369–370
 theism and normative realism, 370–377
 normativity, 345–349, 352, 491–503
 Nozick, Robert, 361
- objectivism, 133–136
 Ockham's razor, 295, 299–300
 omnipotence of God, 106, 180–182, 309, 335, 371
 evidential objections to atheism, 477, 479
 evidential objections to theism, 192, 194–202
 Hume, 18–19
 logical objections to theism, 169–170, 172–173, 175, 177, 180–182
 necessary evils, 211
 preliminary definitions and assumptions, 492
 prudential objections to theism, 216, 222, 225
 Russell, 87, 89
 Wollstonecraft, 68
 omnipresence of God, 196
 omniscience of God, 100, 106, 309, 371, 477, 492
 evidential objections to theism, 192–196, 198, 200–202
 Hume, 18–19
 logical objections to theism, 169–170, 173, 175, 177, 182
 prudential objections to theism, 216, 222, 225
 Ontological Argument, 104, 156, 160, 204
 Marx, 43, 47, 48
 ontological naturalism, 251–254, 256–258
 opiates, 50
 Oppy, Graham, 176, 467
 Orwell, George, 173–174
 Nineteen Eighty-Four, 173
- Paine, Thomas, 61, 63–64, 69, 79, 81
 The Age of Reason, 64, 78
 The Rights of Man, 61
- Paley, William, 328
 Natural Theology, 198, 328
 pantheism, 33, 156
 Parker, Theodore, 73
 parsimony, 119, 299–300
 Partridge, E., 263, 269
 Pascal, B., 141, 219–221, 224, 507, 513–517
 Pensées, 513
 wager, 513–517
 Paul, 76–77, 191
 conversion, 199
 Payne, Thomas, 119
 Peirce, Charles Sanders, 254, 319
 pragmatism, 111, 113, 115, 116, 120–122
 People's Temple, 429
 permanence, 124, 131–132, 133, 134
 Pew Forum, 158, 404, 410, 482, 484
 phenomenal conservatism, 479, 485
 Phillips, D. Z., 208
 Philo's Reversal, 16
 Philosophical Agnosticism, 34–35, 36, 40
 Philosophical Atheism, 34–35, 36–39
 philosophy, 1–2, 4, 10–11
 death, 265, 269, 273
 education, 383, 385–387, 390–394
 empiricism, 99–108
 ethics education, 383, 385–387, 390–393
 evidential objections to atheism, 476–479, 481, 484, 487
 evolution, 327, 332, 335, 337–338
 existentialism, 123–136
 free will, 237–240, 242–243, 245–246
 God and meaning, 355–359, 363–364
 Greece, 323–326
 Holbach, 29–32, 33–34
 Hume, 17, 23
 Marx, 43, 45, 46, 48
 methods of science, 291, 295, 298, 300
 naturalism, 152–162, 251, 253
 normative objections to atheism, 491, 493–496, 503
 postmodernism, 138–149
 pragmatism, 111–122
 Wollstonecraft, 60, 62
 physicalism, 4, 5, 242–243, 251–252
 Picasso, Pablo, 360, 361
 Pike, N., 179–180
 Pitcher, George, 263–266

- Plantinga, Alvin, 106–107, 182–183, 483
 Plato and Platonism, 65, 139–140, 156,
 250, 498
 evolution, 323, 325, 326
 Laws, 323
 Phaedo, 325
 Republic, 325
 Timaeus, 325
 pluralism, 389, 437, 452–454, 456
 politics, 436, 442, 444
 church and state, 436–444
 education, 383–394
 happiness, 396–415
 violence, 421–432
 polytheism, 17–18, 191, 195, 201–202,
 205, 250
 Popper, Karl, 102, 295
 Popular Religiosity Versus Secularism Scale
 (PRVSS), 397, 401
 Positive Atheism, 80–82
 Positive Christianity, 422
 Positive Free First-Order Logics (P-FFOL), 451
 positivism, 104, 148, 155, 171, 291–292
 Comte, 81
 Reichenbach, 101
 posthumous harm, 262–266
 case against, 266–268
 case against wrongs, 268–271
 rationality, 272–273
 recalcitrant intuitions, 271–272
 postmodernism, 138–149
 Badiou, Nancy, and Derrida, 138–139,
 143–148
 Nietzsche and Heidegger, 138, 139–141
 Sartre and Foucault, 138, 141–143
 Pour-El, Marian, and Ian Richards, 457
 Practical Normative Skepticism, 368
 Pragmatic Atheism, 34–35, 40
 pragmatism, 111–122, 255
 atheism, 34–35, 40, 119–122, 456–460
 classical logical consequence, 456–460
 differences, 115–116
 knowledge, 112–115
 prudential objections to theism, 217–219,
 221, 227
 standard objections, 116–119
 prayer for the ill, 320–321
 predictive power, 193, 194–195
 presuppositionalism, 316, 317
 Preventing Immorality Principle, 210–211
 Priest, G., 458
 Principle of Independence, 454, 455, 462
 Principle of Tolerance, 452, 453
 prior probability, 193–194
 progressive naturalism, 152–162
 Pruss, Alexander, 213
 pseudo-profundity, 173–174
 Psillos, S., 293
 public reason, 436, 438–441
 priority, 440, 442, 443–444
 Putnam, Samuel, 111

 Quakers, 72–74
 quantified modal logic (QML), 460–462, 463
 quantum mechanics (QM), 456, 457, 465
 free will, 237, 239
 naturalism, 154–155, 156, 157
 quasi-fideism, 277, 284–286
 Quine, W. V. O. 99, 101–102, 292
 pragmatism, 111, 115, 117

 Rabin, Yitzhak, 431
 radical skepticism, 280–281
 Randi, James, 320
 Rational Dissenters, 58–60, 62–64, 68
 Rawls, J., 438–439
 Political Liberalism, 444
 Rea, M., 477
 Reagan, Ronald, 264–266, 406
 realism, 369–377
 realistic intuition, 370
 real-world hypothesis (RWH), 318
 recalcitrant intuitions, 271–272
 reformed epistemology, 282
 Reichenbach, Hans, 101, 103
 Reisner, A., 510
 religion, 121, 173–174, 205, 349, 436–444
 education, 383–394
 evidentialism, 303, 311, 316, 320–321
 evidential objections to atheism, 476–487
 evidential objections to theism, 193–202
 evolution, 324–325, 328–329, 332–338
 existentialism, 123, 125, 127–129
 feminism, 59, 67
 free will, 246
 God and Meaning, 358, 360, 363
 happiness, 396–415, 512–513
 implications of empiricism, 103–107, 108
 life expectancy, 512–513
 Marx, 43–54

- religion (*cont'd*)
 - morality, 217, 425–427, 432
 - naturalism, 152, 158, 161–162
 - normative objections to atheism, 491–503
 - normative skepticism, 372, 375
 - postmodernism, 141–148
 - prudential objections to atheism, 506–517
 - prudential objections to theism, 217–218, 220, 222–226
 - retreat, 198–200
 - Russell, 83–94
 - sacred values, 428, 430–432
 - societal success, 396–415, 422–423
 - skepticism, 277–286
 - Stanton, 71–82
 - tolerance and intolerance, 427–428, 432
 - violence, 396, 404–405, **405, 406**, 411–412, 421–432
 - Wollstonecraft, 58–69
- religious experience, 476, 478–479, 483–487
- religious skepticism, 280–282
- representationalism, 369–370
- Rescher, Nicholas, 111, 115
- Rey, Marc-Michel, 31–32
- Richardson, Samuel
 - L'Infer d'étruit*, 32
- Riddle of the Stone, 170, 172, 180, 182
- Rinard, S., 507, 509
- Robespierre, 33, 63–65
- Roland, Madame, 63–64
- Rorty, Richard, 111, 117
- Rose, Ernestine, 80
 - “Defense of Atheism”, 80
- Rose, Louis, 320
- Ross, W. D., 263, 350–351
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 60
 - Holbach, 29–31, 33
 - Nouvelle Heloise*, 29
 - Social Contract*, 65
 - Wollstonecraft, 59, 60, 63–66, 68
- Rowe, William, 200, 477
- Rowling, J. K., 270
- Royce, Josiah, 111, 115, 120
- Ruether, Rosemary Radford, 80
- Ruge, Arnold, 43
- Rumfitt, I., 455
- Rundle, Bede, 180
- Russell, Bertrand, 83–94, 219, 259, 456, 459
 - A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*, 88
 - Principles of Social Reconstruction*, 92
 - Russell on Religion*, 85
 - Scientific Outlook*, 88
 - “The Essence of Religion”, 92, 93
 - The Value of Free Thought*, 88
 - Why I am Not a Christian*, 83–85, 88
- Russell, Robert J., 333, 336
- Ryan, Leo, 429
- sacred values, 428, 430–432
- Salmon, W., 293
- same-sex marriage, 440, 442
- Sandrier, Alain, 31
- Sartine, Antoine de, 29, 31
- Sartre, Jean-Paul, 141–143, 225
 - Being and Nothingness*, 142
 - existentialism, 127–128, 134, 138, 141, 142
 - “Existentialism is a Humanism”, 142, 363
 - The Words*, 225
- Schellenberg, J., 184–185, 477, 487
 - Divine Hiddenness and Human Reason*, 184
- Schiller, F. S. C., 111
- Schlesinger, G., 514
- Schurz, G., 462
- science, 198–200, 291–301
 - computers, 158–160, 161
 - contrastive empiricism, 296–299
 - empiricism, 292–293
 - evolution, 326–328
 - hypothetico-deductivism, 295–296
 - inference to the best explanation, 293–295
 - logical positivism, 291–292
 - naturalizing abstract sciences, 158–159
 - naturalizing concrete sciences, 159–160
 - Ockham's razor, 299–300
- Scientific Progress, 198–200
- Second Great Awakening, 71
- Selengut, C., 428
- Sellars, Wilfrid, 111, 115, 117
- senses, 22, 99–103, 107–108
 - Holbach, 34–37
- Sepkoski, Jack, 336
- Shafer-Landau, Russ, 345, 376
- Shakespeare, William, 54
- Shannon, Claude, 158
- Shintō, 486, 487

- Shiver, Alice, 123
 Sidgwick, H., 501
 Siegel, Paul N.
 The Meek and the Militant, 51
 significance, 227–228
 Skeptical Rule, 486
 skepticism, 4, 105, 157, 277–286, 303,
 318–319, 367–377
 atheism, 5, 277–280, 286, 372
 evidential objections to theism, 201
 Hume, 25–26
 logical objections to theism, 185, 187
 methods of science, 293, 295
 naturalism, 152, 157, 161
 normative, 367–377
 normative objections to atheism, 498
 pragmatism, 117–118
 prudential objections to atheism, 512, 515
 radical, 280–282
 religious, 280–282
 Russell, 85
 slavery and abolition, 7, 46, 128, 135
 Stanton, 72, 74, 75
 Sloan, R., 512
 Smart, J. J. C., 250
 Smith, Gerrit, 72
 Sobel, J., 182, 183
 societal success, 396–397, 398, 399–402,
 403, 404–415
 casualties from hostilities, **405**
 religion, 396–415, 422–423
 Socrates, 323, 325, 497
 The Euthyphro, 425
 soul, 86–87, 115, 156, 309, 356, 393
 evolution, 325–326
 existentialism, 130, 135
 free will, 241–245
 naturalism, 152, 153, 156
 Russell, 85, 86–87, 89, 90, 92
 Stanton, 71
 soul-making theodicy, 205, 208–209
 Spanish Inquisition, 421
 special religious education (SRE), 383,
 384–386, 392–394
 educational value, 387–390
 Spinoza, Baruch, 26, 159, 192
 Stanton, Elizabeth Cady, 71–82
 Autobiography, 72
 Chicago Record, 72
 Declaration of Rights and Sentiments, 74
 “The Degraded Status of Woman in the
 Bible”, 81
 “The Pleasures of Age”, 81
 The Revolution, 75–76, 79
 The Truth, 79
 The Woman’s Bible, 76, 78–81
 Stanton, Henry, 72
 Stern, Philip Van Doren
 “The Greater Gift”, 134
 Stirner, Max
 The Ego and Its Own, 45
 stoicism, 157, 162
 Stone, Lucy
 Woman’s Journal, 79
 Stowe, Harriet Beecher
 Uncle Tom’s Cabin, 332
 Strawson, Galen, 219
 Street, Sharon, 498
 strong atheism, 5, 22, 397
 strong naturalism, 252–253, 257–259
 strong supernaturalism, 250–251, 253,
 254–258, 259
 strong theism, 5, 397, 404
 Stump, Eleonore, 174, 208, 209, 211
 subjectivism, 134–135, 136
 substance dualism, 242
 Successful Societies Scale (SSS), 397, 401,
 402, 407
 suffering, 22, 200–201, 204–205, 411
 evidential objections to atheism, 477, 479
 evolution, 331–333, 335
 Holbach, 33
 logical objections to theism, 182, 204–213
 Marx, 50–51
 methods of science, 292, 293, 296
 normative objections to theism, 204–205,
 206–213
 Russell, 87, 89
 Stanton, 71
 violence, 423, 430
 Sullivan, Meghan, 131, 134–135
 supernaturalism, 104, 108, 250–259,
 377, 492
 atheism, 250–251, 253–254, 258–259
 evidentialism, 309, 311, 320
 evidential objections to theism, 195, 199
 freewill, 237, 240–246
 God and meaning, 355, 357–361

- supernaturalism (*cont'd*)
 - Hume, 24
 - Marx, 43, 46, 49, 51, 53
 - moral objectivity, 344
 - naturalism, 162, 195, 251–254
 - prudential objections to theism, 216, 220
 - rejection of beliefs, 258–259
 - religion and societal success, 396, 408–411, 413, 415
 - religious experience, 487
 - Russell, 84, 88–89, 92
 - St. Paul, 199
 - strong, 250–251, 253, 254–258, 259
 - violence, 424, 426–427, 429
 - weak, 250–251, 253
 - weak naturalism and atheism, 253–254
- superstition, 2, 144, 308, 309–310
 - Holbach, 39–40
 - Hume, 17, 18, 20, 21
 - Russell, 83, 85, 93
 - Stanton, 81
 - Wollstonecraft, 59
- Swinburne, Richard, 107, 294–295, 484

- Tait, Katherine, 93–94
- Tarski, A., 453, 456
- Taves, A., and E. Asprem, 487
- Taylor, Barbara, 62, 67
- Taylor, James Stacey, 263, 264–265
- Teresa of Avila
 - Interior Castle*, 484
- Teresa, Mother, 360, 361, 493
- terrorism, 385, 389, 404, 405
- Terror Management Theory (TMT), 125, 129
- theism, 3–6, 10–11, 104–106, 393
 - argument from locality, 196
 - beliefs as objection to atheism, 479–483
 - benefits, 511–513
 - benefits of God's existence, 221–222
 - cosmological evidence, 196–198
 - debunking arguments, 222–224
 - defeat of evil, 212–213
 - disadvantages, 406, 411–413
 - disadvantages of God's existence, 224–227
 - divine foreknowledge, 177–179
 - divine hiddenness, 183–185, 195–196
 - divine personhood, 179–180
 - divine simplicity, 174–177
 - evidentialism, 303, 319–321
 - evidential objections, 191–202
 - evidential objections to atheism, 476–483
 - evolution, 198, 332–333, 335
 - existence of gratuitous evil, 200–201
 - existentialism, 123, 127, 129, 131, 133, 136
 - external logical objections, 170–171, 172–173, 177, 181–182, 188
 - free will, 206–208, 245, 246
 - God and meaning, 355–364
 - hostilities, 404, **405**, 405, **406**, 411–412
 - Hume, 15–16, 17–25
 - individualism, 209–212
 - internal logical objections, 169–170, 171–173, 177, 180–181, 188
 - logical objections, 169–188
 - logical objections to atheism, 463–468
 - logical problem of evil, 182–183
 - metaethics, 343–354
 - methods of science, 291–295, 296, 299–301
 - naturalism, 156, 160, 161
 - neuroscience, 193–194
 - nihilism, meaning and significance, 227–228
 - nonsense objections, 171, 173, 174, 180
 - normative objections, 204–213
 - normative objections to atheism, 491–503
 - normative skepticism, 367, 369, 370–377
 - Pascal's wager, 513–517
 - postmodernism, 138–139, 141–149
 - pragmatism, 112, 119, 121–122
 - predictive power, 193–195
 - prior probability, 193–194
 - prudential objections, 216–229
 - prudential objections to atheism, 506–517
 - response strategies, 171–174
 - Russell, 84–88, 94
 - scientific progress and religious retreat, 198–200
 - skepticism, 185, 187, 201, 277–278, 283, 286
 - societal success, 396–397, 398, 399–402, 404, 405–414
 - soul-making, 208–209
 - suffering, 204–205
 - supernatural, 250, 254, 258–259
 - value of belief, 218–221
 - verificationism and falsificationism, 185–188
- theocracy, 30–31, 66, 436, 438

- theodicy, 201, 205, 206–212
 Tipler, F., 157, 159
 tolerance and intolerance, 427–428, 432
 Tolstoy, Leo, 130, 131, 134, 357
 “Confession”, 130
 Tooley, Michael, 319
 transcendentalism, 73
 Troelstra, A., and D. Van Dalen, 458
 true religion, 17, 19–22, 23
 Trump, Donald, 181, 264–265
 truth-maker thesis, 454–455
 Tucker, C., 485
 Turing, Alan, 157, 158, 159
- underdetermination principle, 278–279,
 281–282
- Van Fraassen, Bas, 99, 100, 111
 Vercruysse, Jeroom, 30, 31
 verificationism, 117, 171, 174, 185–188,
 291, 458–459
 Verification Principle, 171, 185
 Vienna Circle
 The Scientific World Conception, 291–292
 violence, 421–432
 afterlife, 429–430
 cosmic war, 428–429
 religion and justification, 428, 429–432
 religion and morality, 425–427
 sacred values, 430–432
 societal success, 396, 399, 404–405,
 407, 412
 tolerance and intolerance, 427–428, 432
 Vogel, Jonathan, 318
 “Cartesian Scepticism and Inference to Best
 Explanation”, 318
 Volland, Sophie, 29
 Voltaire, 31, 32, 62, 64, 79
- war and hostilities, 7, 75, 173, 202, 268,
 422–423
 cosmic, 428–429
 societal success, 396, 404–405, **405, 406**,
 406–407, 411–412
 Ward, Keith, 186, 421
 weak atheism, 5, 22
 weak naturalism, 252, 253–254, 256,
 258–259
 weak supernaturalism, 250–251, 253
- well-formed formulae (WFF), 451–452
 Wells, H. G.
 The Invisible Man, 187
 Wesley, John, 108
 West, D. J., 320
 Whewell, William, 329, 330, 337
 White, Andrew Dickson
 *A History of the Warfare of Science with
 Theology within Christendom*, 198, 320
 Wielenberg, Erik, 498–499
 Wiggins, David, 499
 Wilkins, J. S., and P. E. Griffiths, 483
 Williams, Helen Marie, 63
 Williamson, T., 460, 478–479
 Willis, Andre, 18–19, 21–22
 Wisdom, John, 186–187
 Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 176–177, 250,
 285–286, 338
 On Certainty, 285
 Philosophical Investigations, 176
 Wolf, Susan, 360–361
 Wollstonecraft, Mary, 58–69, 73
 feminism, 59, 67, 68, 69
 Letters from Sweden and Norway, 62
 love affairs, 59–60
 Mary, 61
 Original Stories from Real Life, 61
 Thoughts on the Education of Daughters, 59,
 61–62, 64
 Vindication of the Rights of Man, 61
 Vindication of the Rights of Woman, 59–61,
 63, 67
 Wolterstorff, Eleanor, 180
 “Eternity”, 180
 Wolterstorff, Nicholas, 180, 500
 Wright, Martha Coffin, 73
- Xavier, St Francis, 320
- Ye, F., 457
 Yoder, J., 432
 Young Earth Creationism, 187–188, 298,
 409, 311
- Zagzebski, L., 480
 zealots, 5
 Zoroastrianism, 429
 Zionists, 431
 Zuckerman, P., 399, 481